

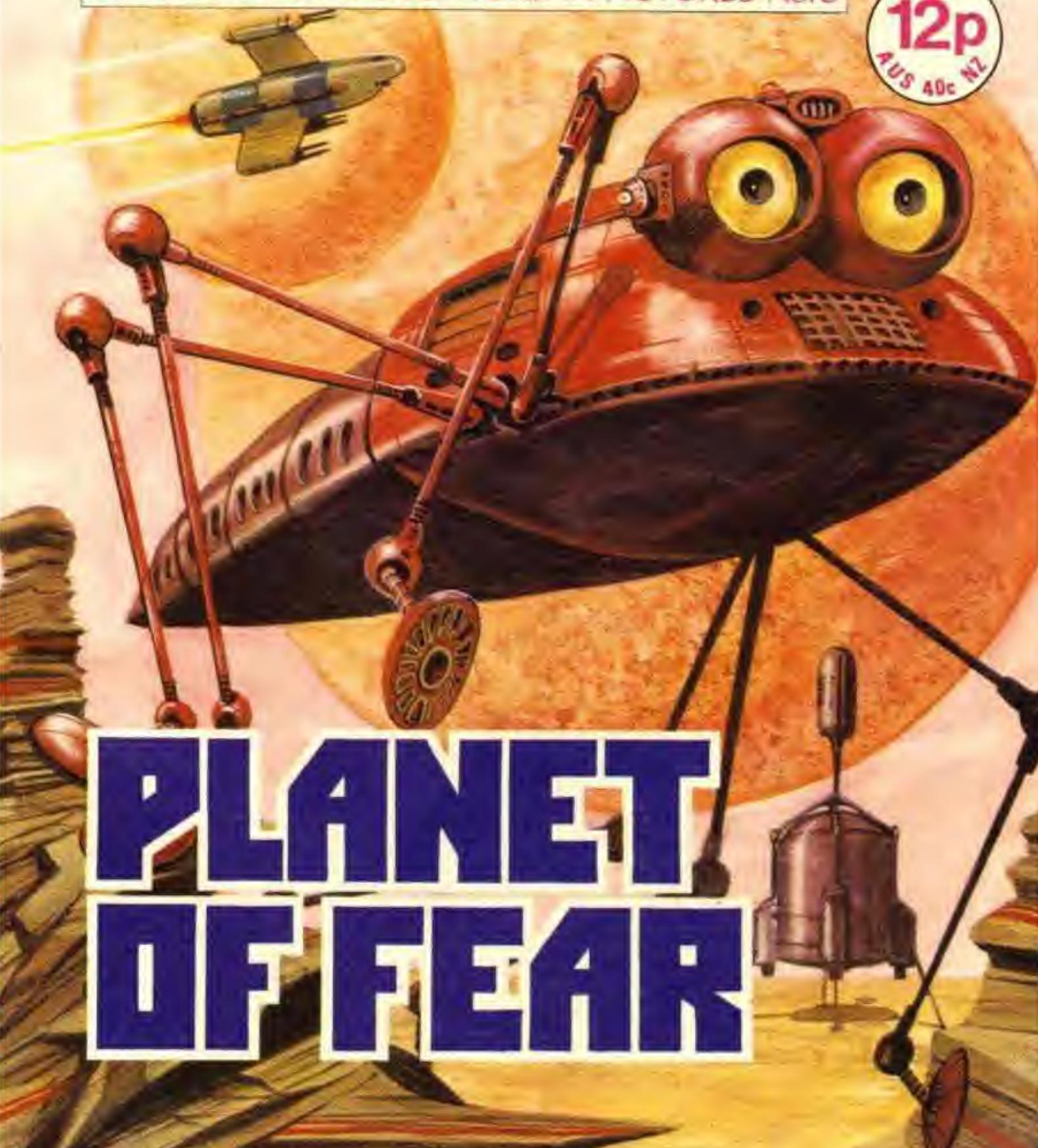
STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No.8

12p

AUS AOC NZ

PLANET OF FEAR

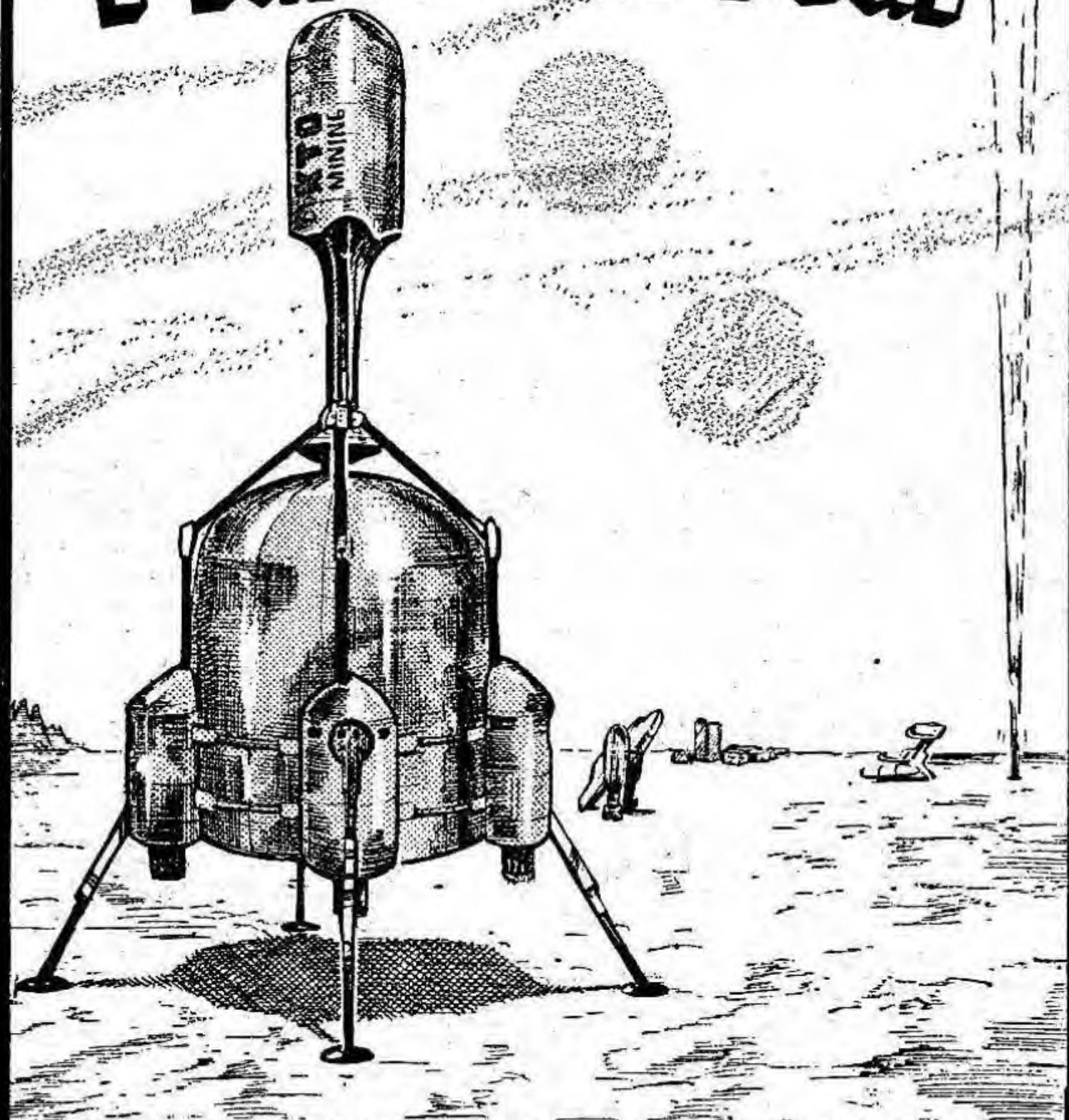


STARBLAZER

THE DEEP
SPACE MINERS
WERE A TOUGH AND
HARDENED BREED OF MEN
WHO BLAZED THE WAY ACROSS THE
UNKNOWN WILDERNESS OF SPACE. THEIRS
WAS A DANGEROUS BUSINESS, WHERE THE RISKS
AND THE REWARDS WERE HIGH.

SARANA LOOKED A PROMISING PLANET. IT WAS COMPLETELY DRY AND
BARREN. EVERY SINGLE DROP OF WATER HAD TO BE SPACE-LIFTED ACROSS
A THOUSAND LIGHT YEARS. BUT AT LEAST IT WAS HARMLESS. OR SO THEY
THOUGHT AS THEY SET UP CAMP AND BEGAN MINING . . .

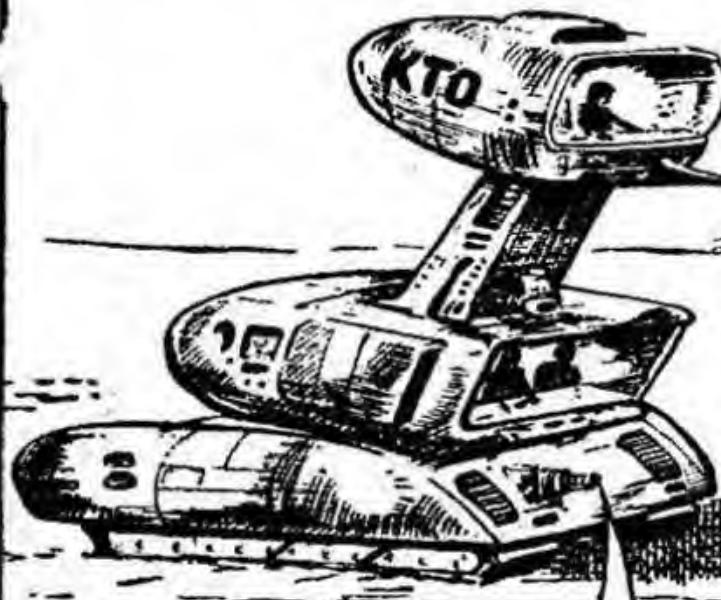
Planet of Fear



AT THE EDGE OF EXPLORED SPACE WAS THE NEWLY DISCOVERED PLANET, SARANA. UNMANNED SPACE SURVEYS HAD INDICATED THAT RARE MINERALS WERE TO BE FOUND THERE BENEATH ITS TOTALLY WATERLESS SURFACE. A DEEP SPACE MINING TEAM HAD ARRIVED AND WERE WORKING THEIR CLAIM . . .

4
THE THREE PROSPECTORS WERE CHECKING THEIR CLAIM.

LOOK AT THAT GEYSER, KORD.
PURE LITHGONIUM. I THINK
WE'VE HIT THE JACKPOT!



I'VE HEARD THAT BEFORE, ORCA. BRING
THE MOLE UP AND TABOR AND I WILL
TAKE A LOOK.

AS THE GEYSER'S ERUPTION FINISHED, THE TWO
MINERS WALKED ACROSS TO THE HOLE.

KEEP CLEAR OF ITS VAPORISER
TUBES—THEY'RE STILL RED-HOT.



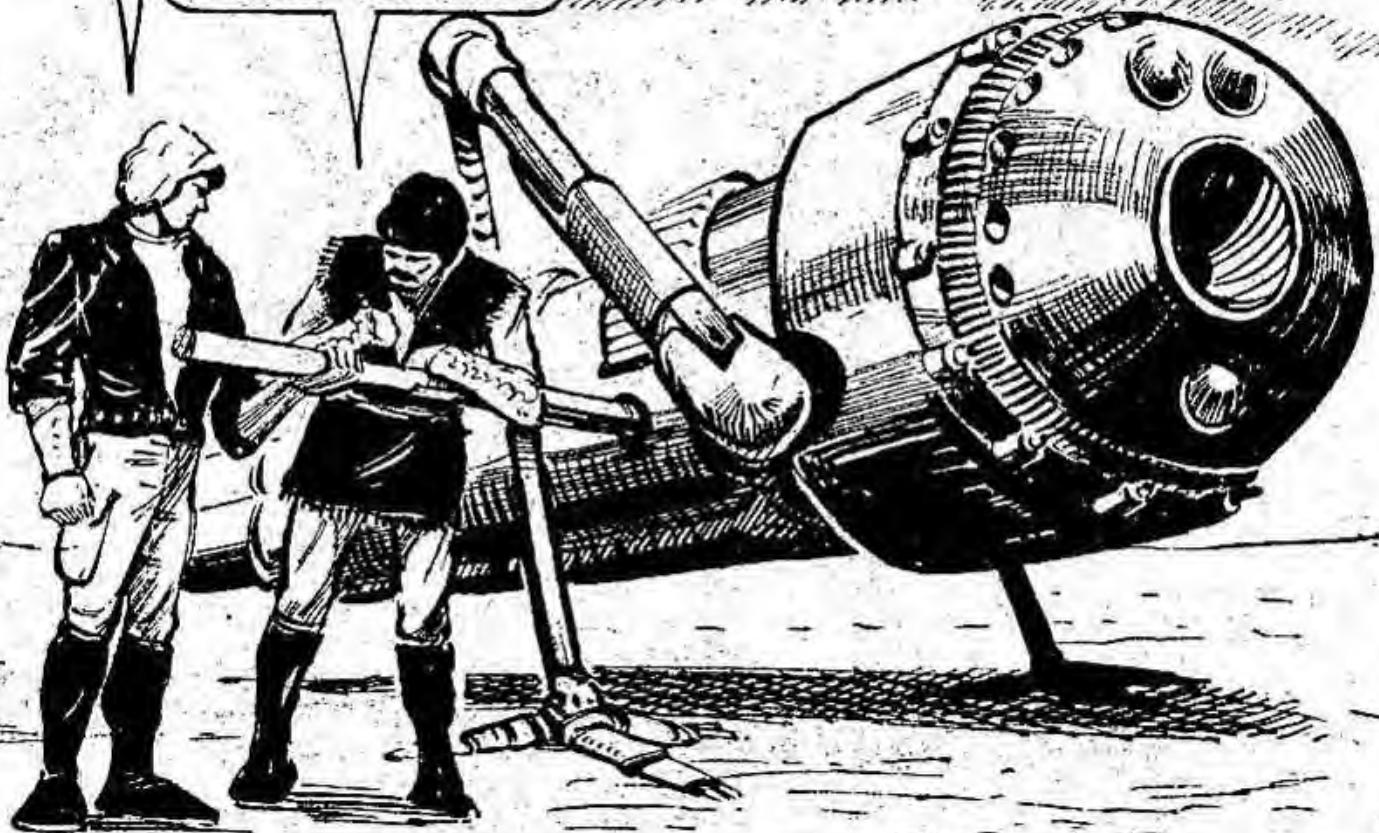
THE ROBOT MOLE, WITH ITS ROTATING LASER CUTTERS,
HEAVED ITSELF OUT OF THE HOLE.

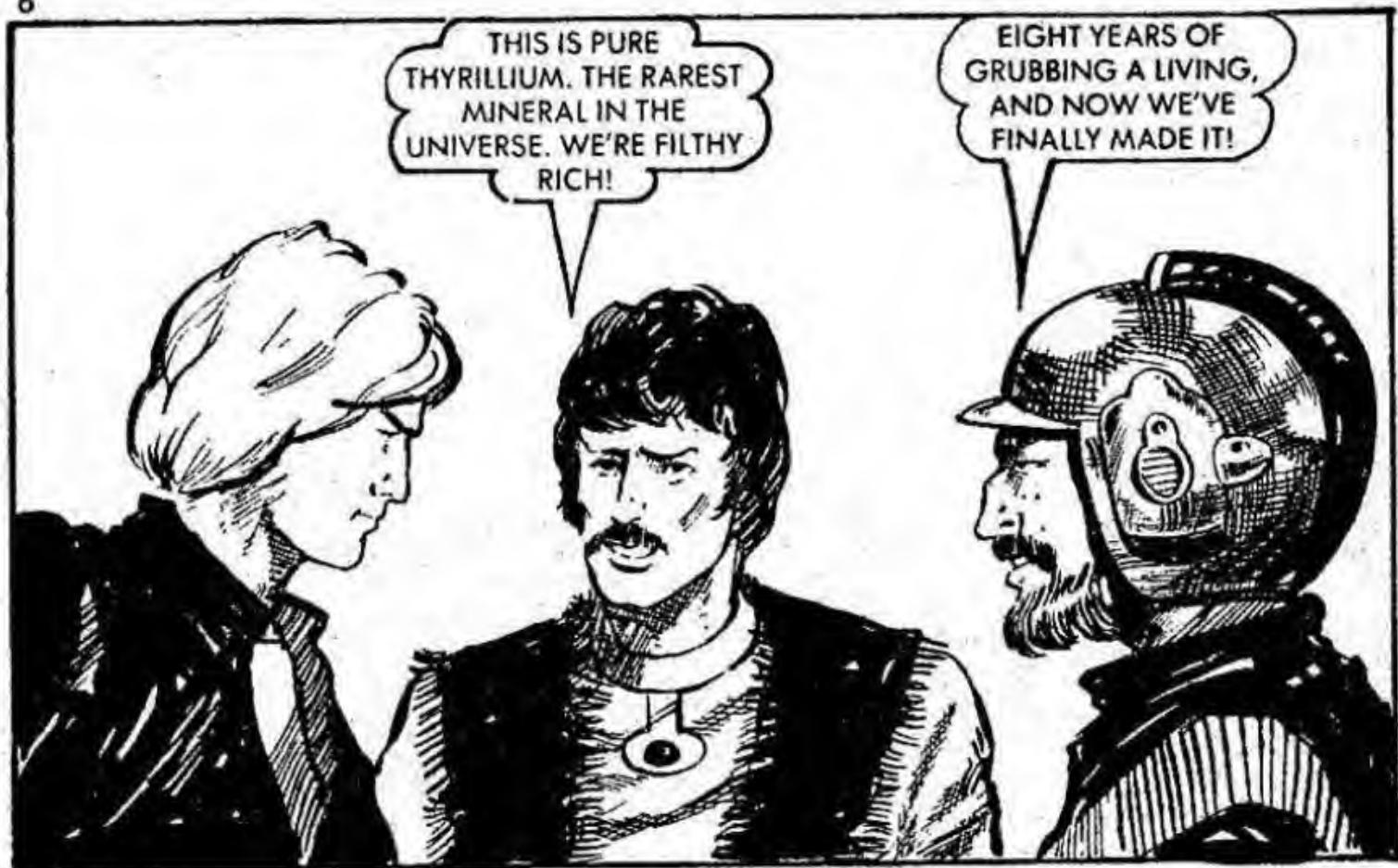
THE ORE SAMPLE TUBE IS
FULL.



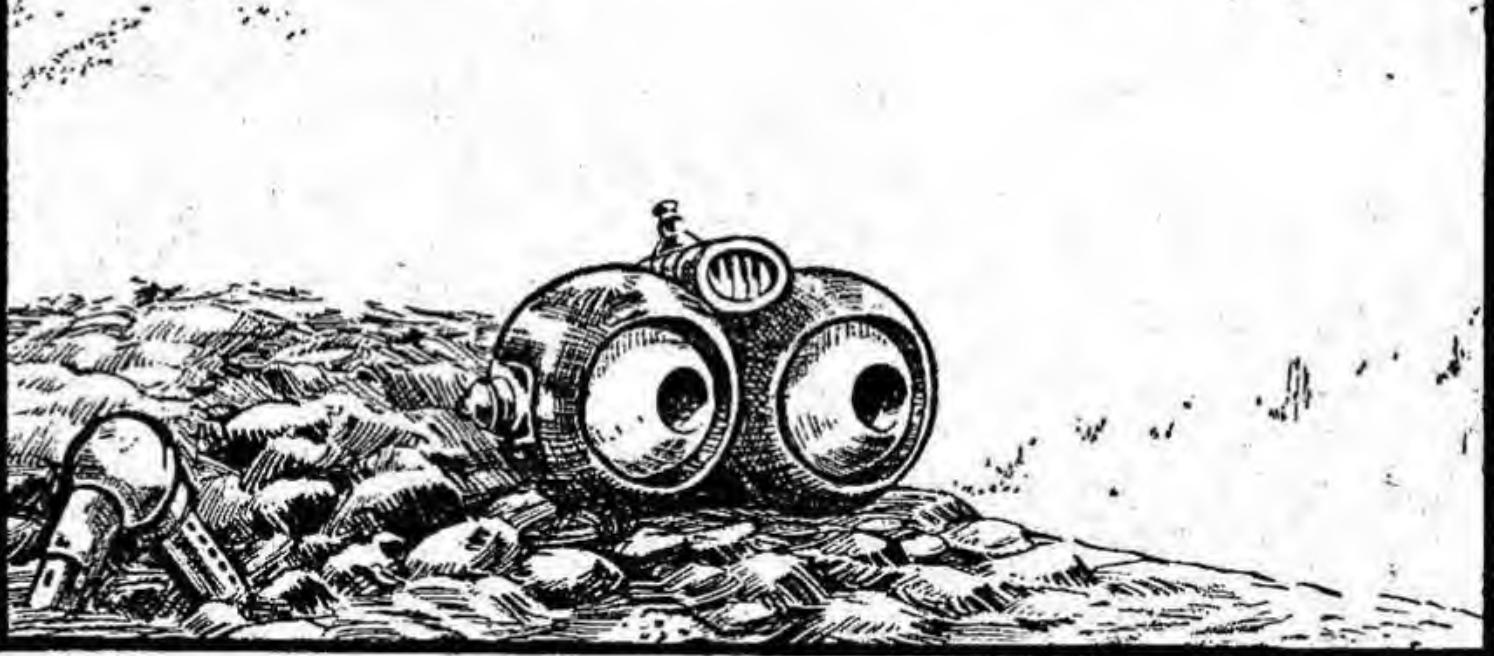
WELL? WHAT'S THE VERDICT,
TABOR? ARE WE RICH?

I WOULDN'T SAY THAT.





BUT THEIR DISCOVERY HADN'T GONE UNNOTICED. FAR OUT IN THE DESERT HIDDEN EYES WATCHED AND PASSED ON THE NEWS...



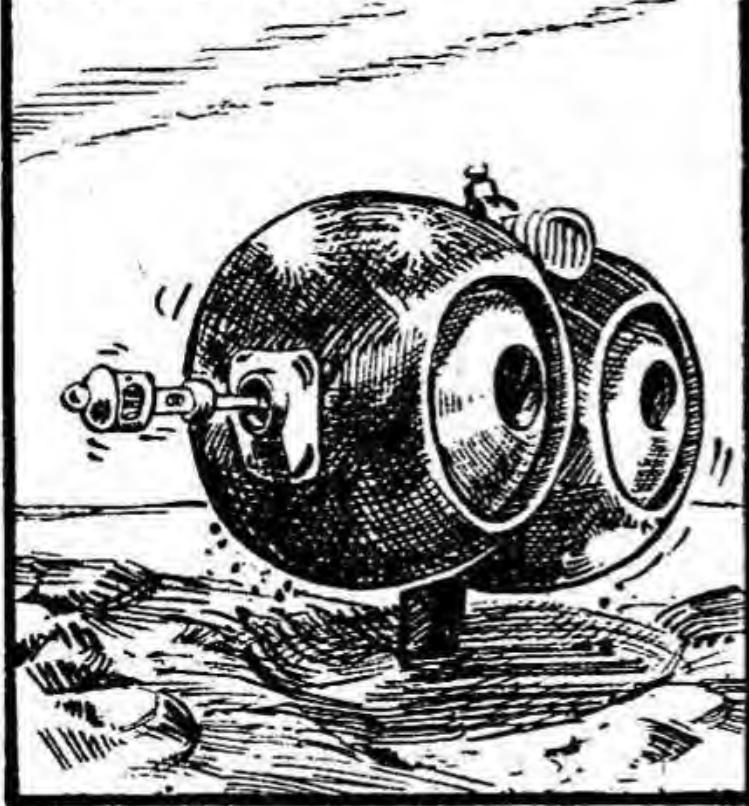
... TWO HUNDRED MILES AWAY TO THE CAMP OF THEIR RIVALS, THE COMEN MINING SYNDICATE.

FETCH THE BOSS—THE SPYDER'S TRANSMITTING.

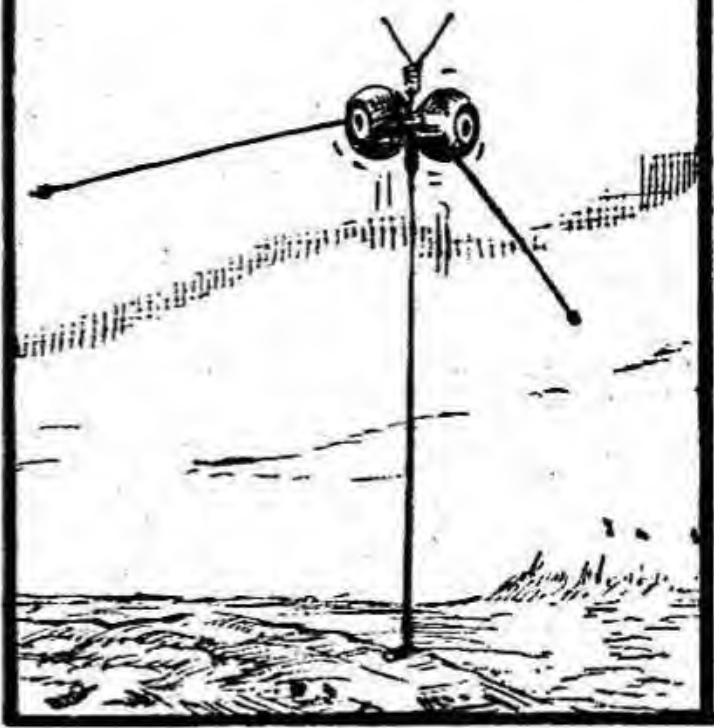




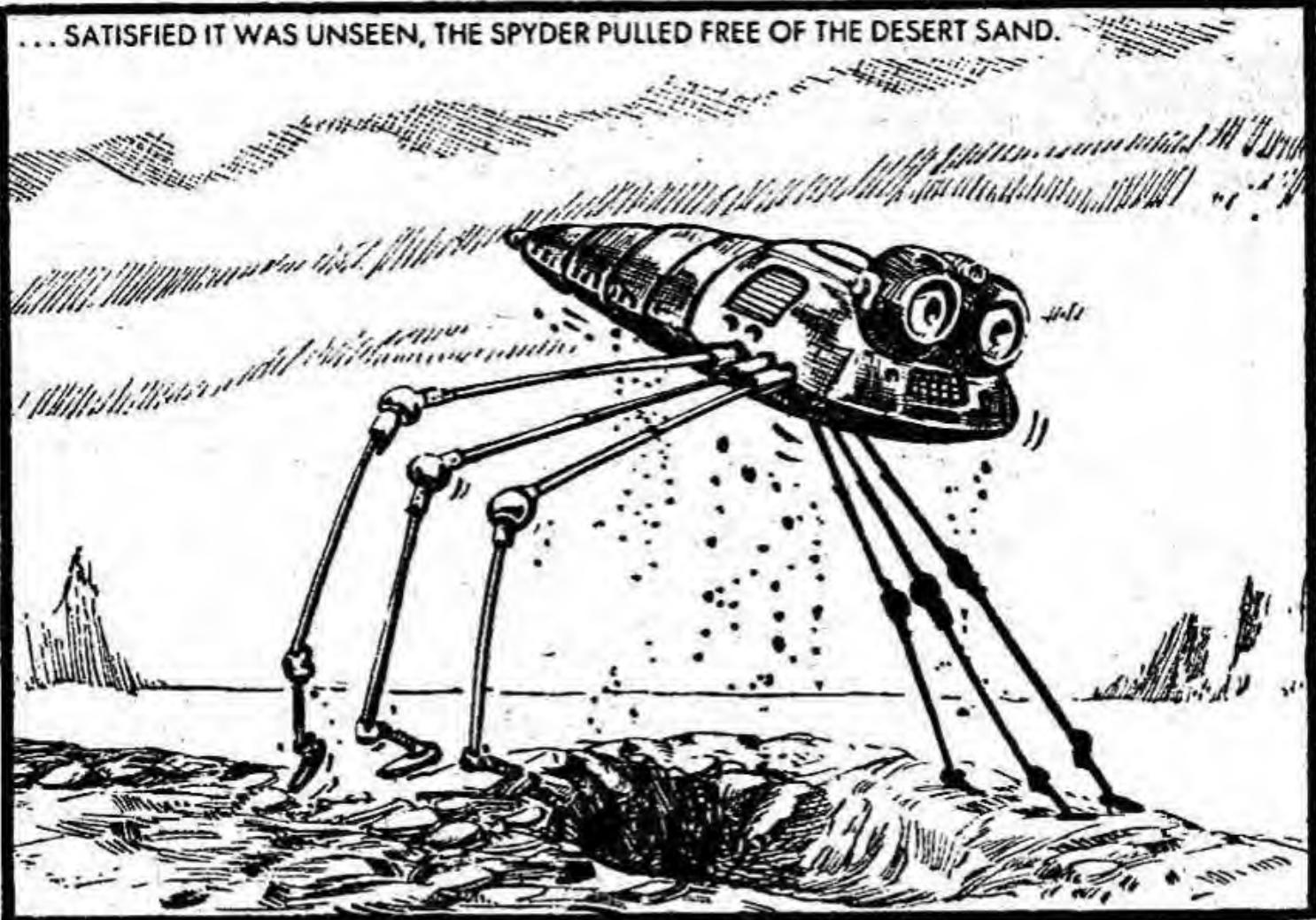
THE CONTROLLER PRESSED A BUTTON, AND FAR AWAY THE SPYDER STIRRED.



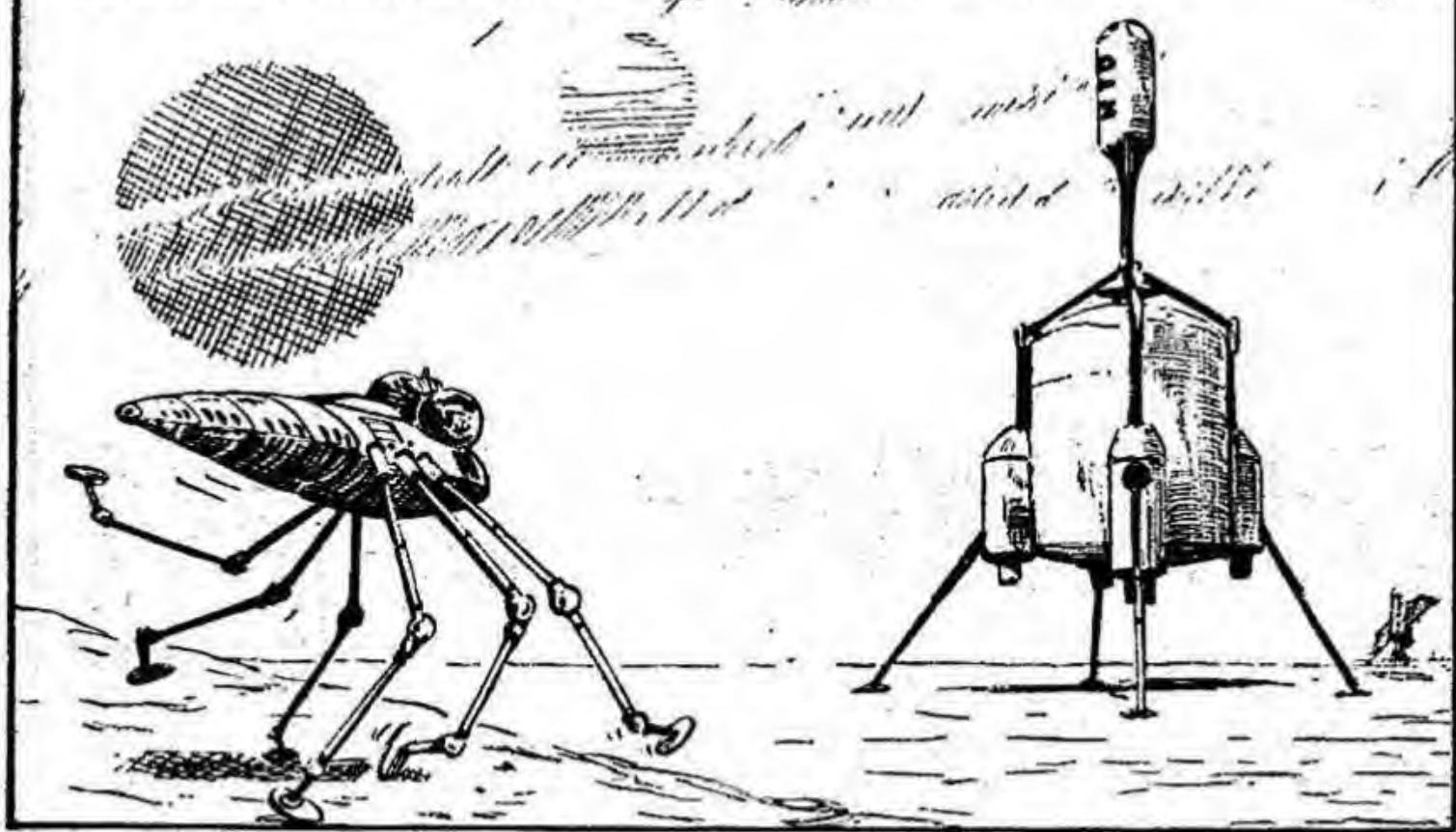
SENSORS MADE A CAREFUL SWEEP OF THE SURROUNDINGS...



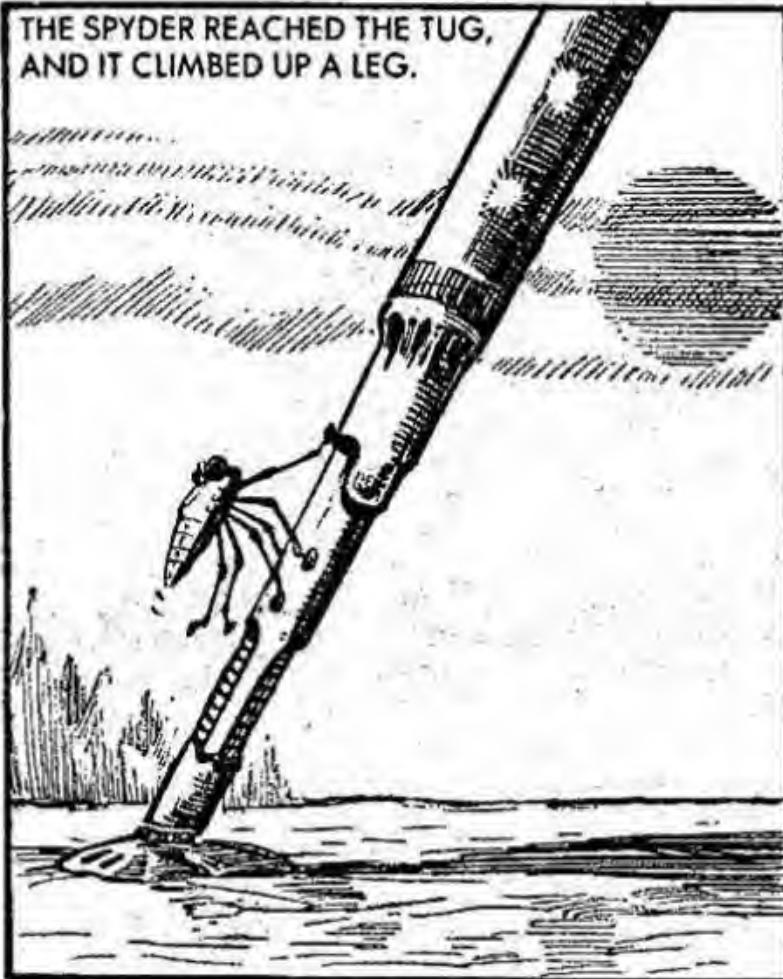
...SATISFIED IT WAS UNSEEN, THE SPYDER PULLED FREE OF THE DESERT SAND.



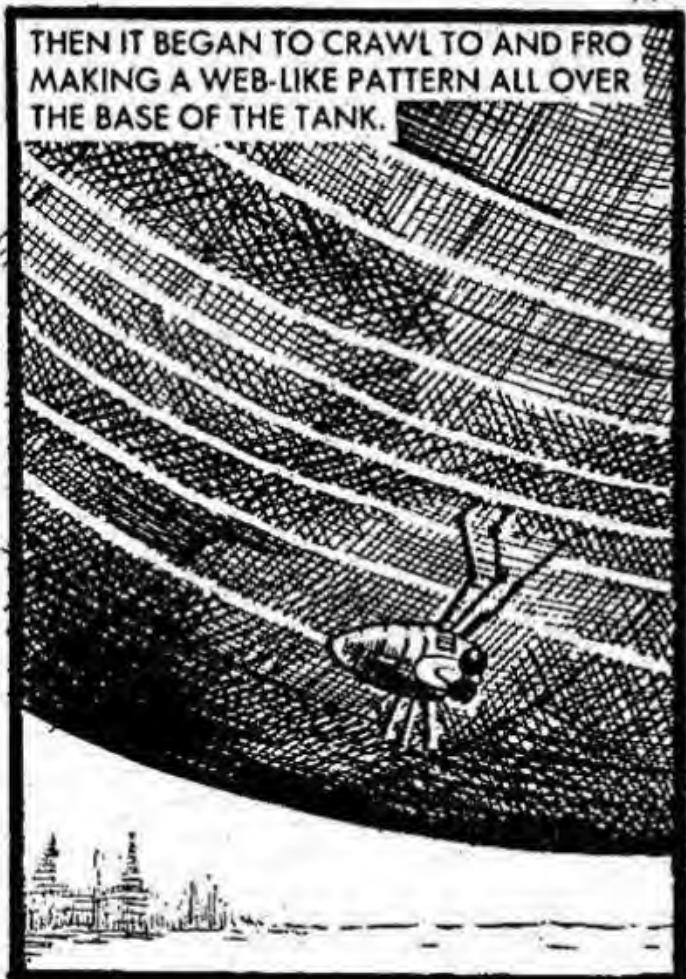
IT SCUTTLED OFF AT TOP SPEED STRAIGHT FOR THE SPACE TUG AT THE EDGE OF THE CLAIM.



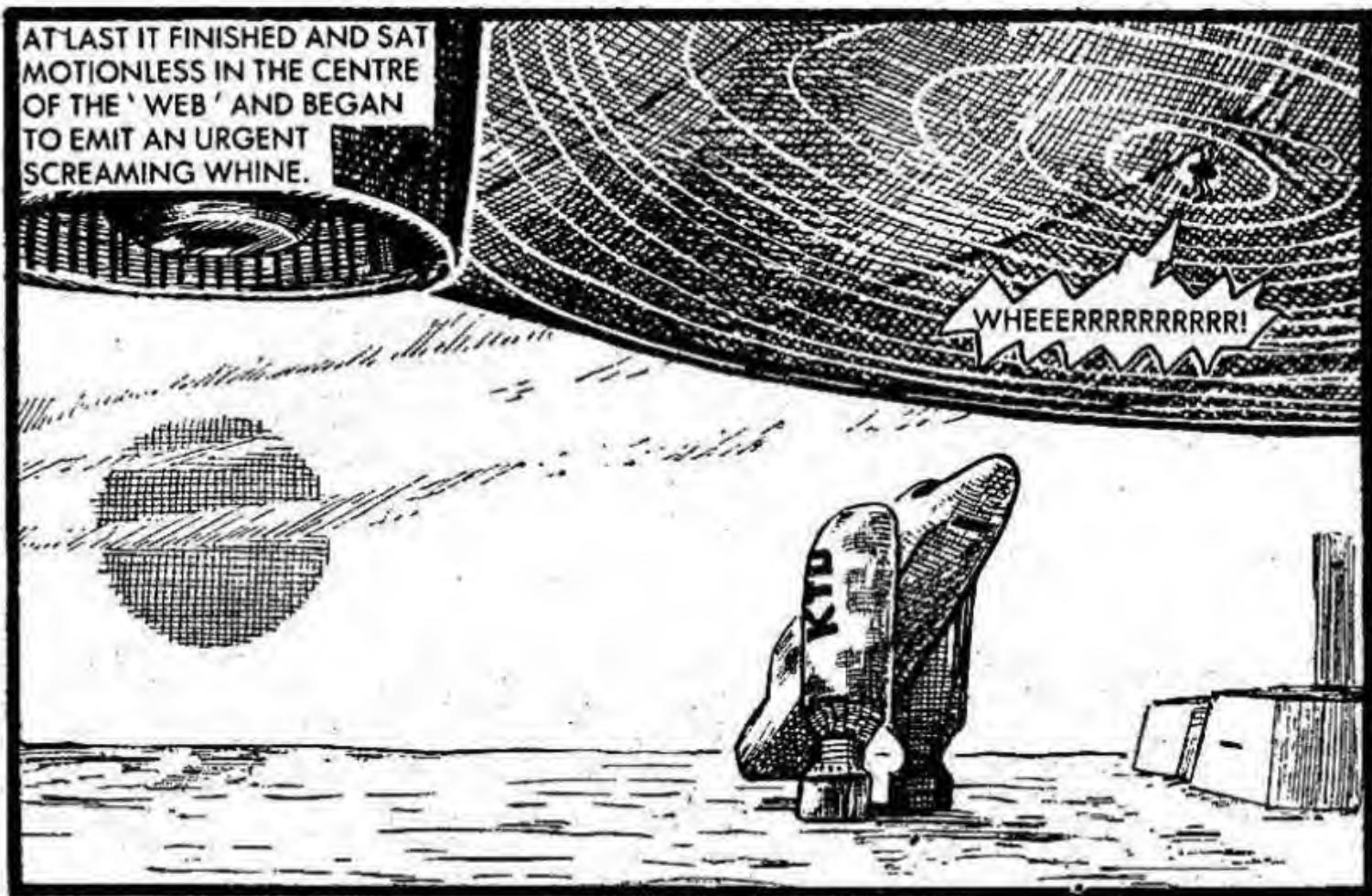
THE SPYDER REACHED THE TUG,
AND IT CLIMBED UP A LEG.

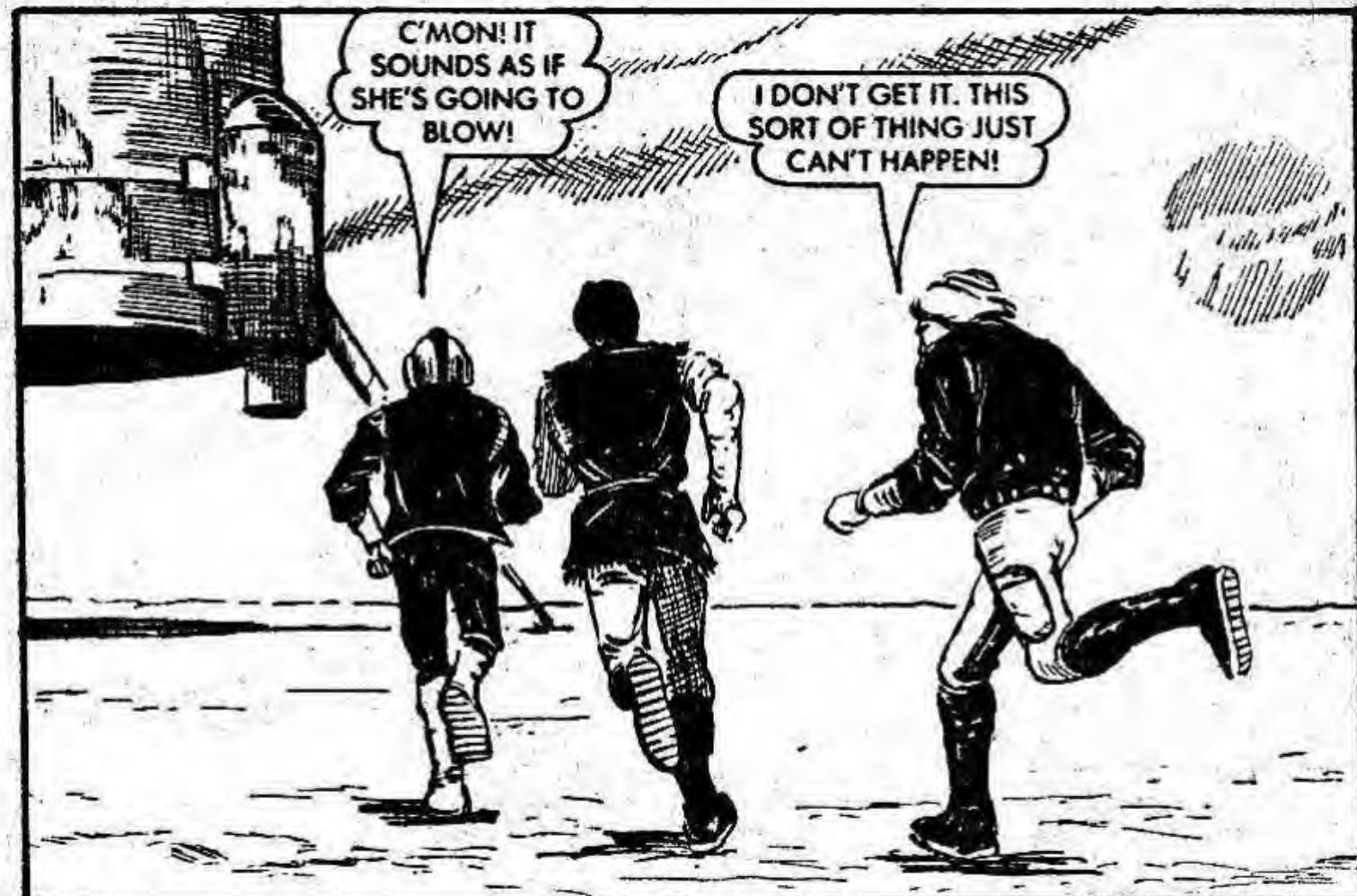


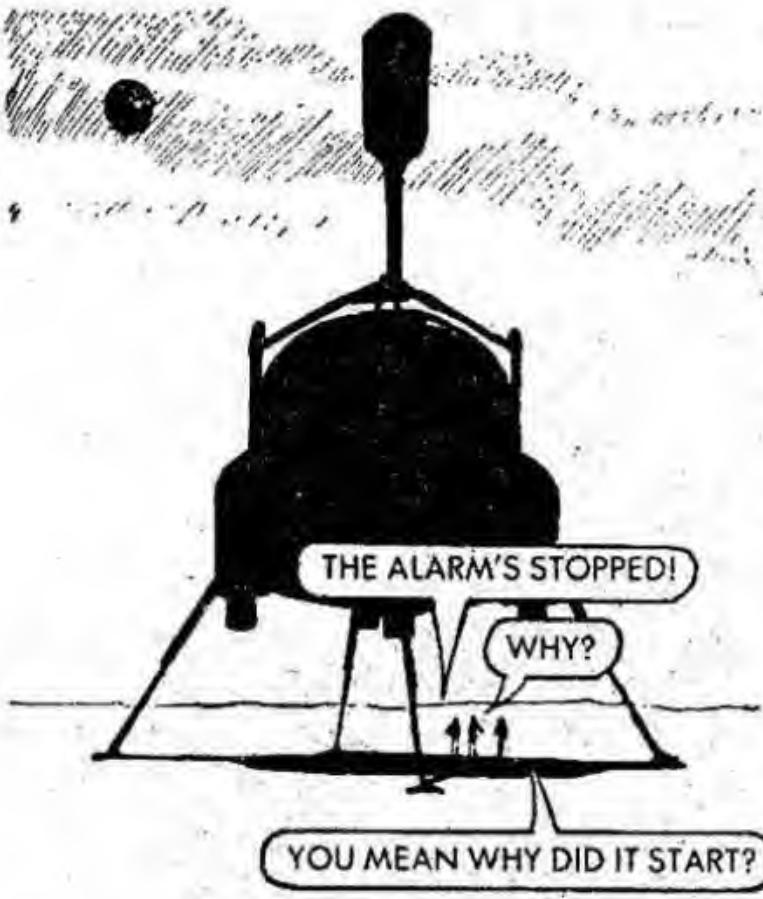
THEN IT BEGAN TO CRAWL TO AND FRO
MAKING A WEB-LIKE PATTERN ALL OVER
THE BASE OF THE TANK.



AT LAST IT FINISHED AND SAT
MOTIONLESS IN THE CENTRE
OF THE 'WEB' AND BEGAN
TO EMIT AN URGENT
SCREAMING WHINE.







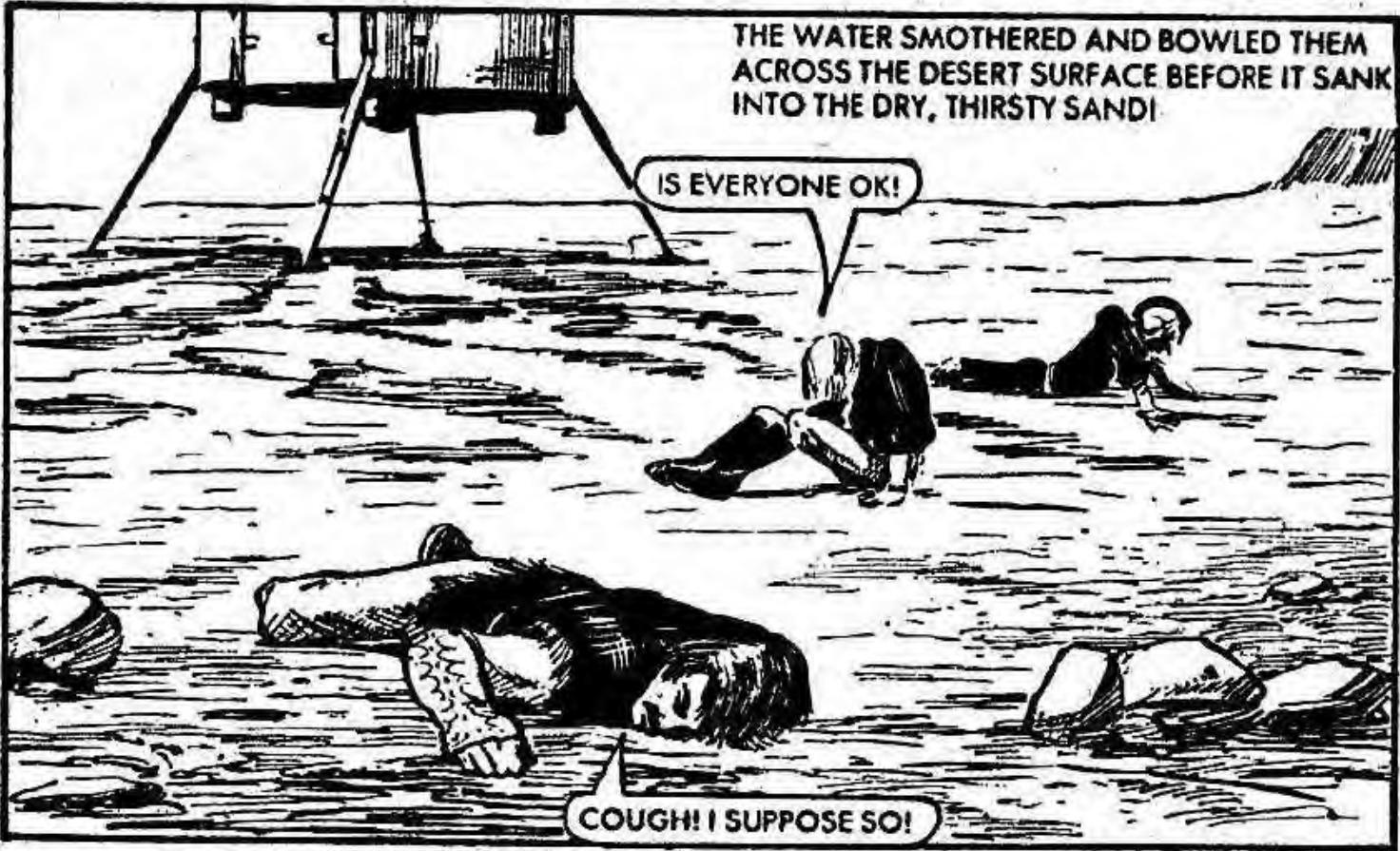
THEN THEY WERE FIGHTING FOR
THEIR LIVES AS A MILLION
GALLONS OF WATER ROARED
OUT OF THE TANK.



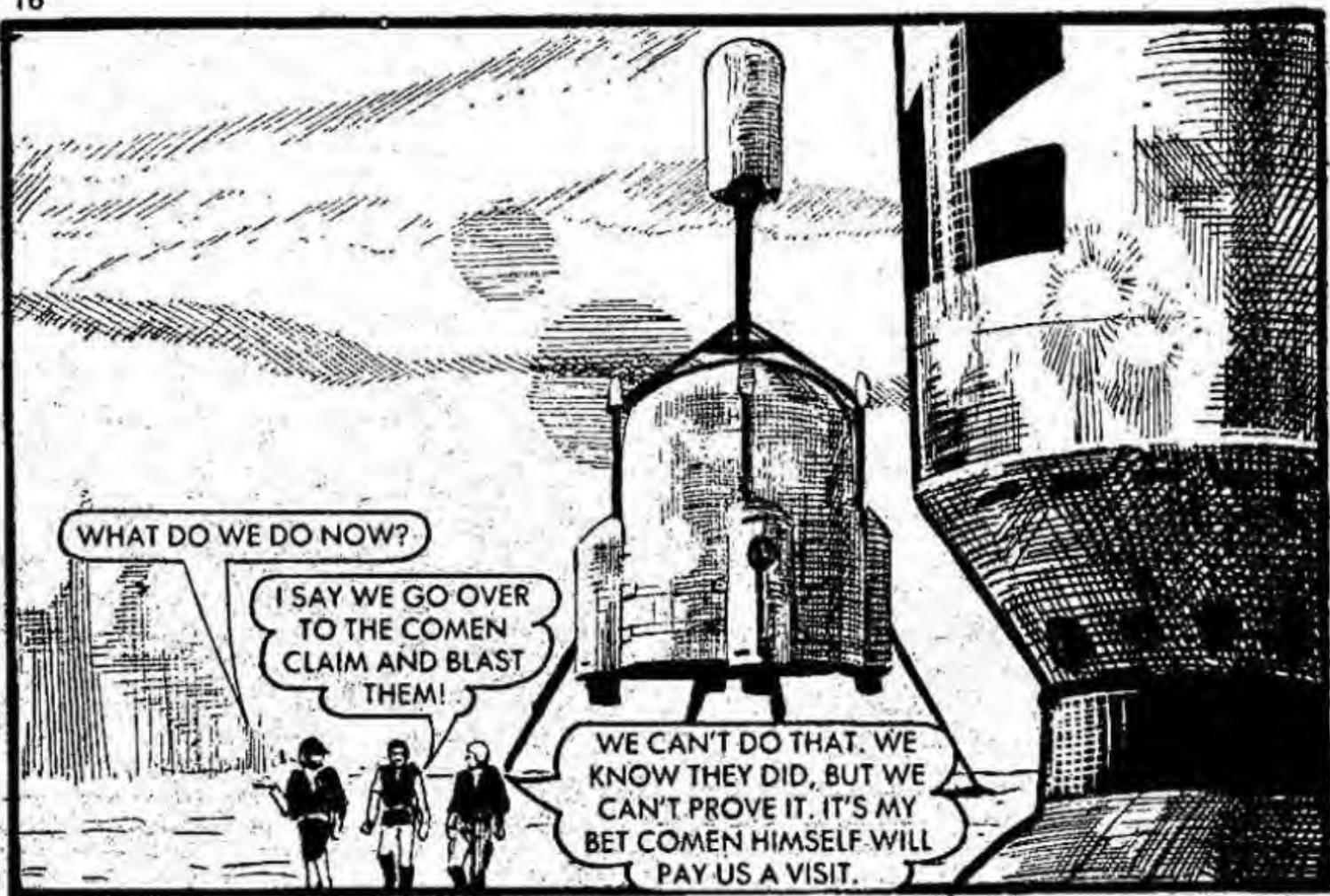
THE WATER SMOOTHERED AND BOWLED THEM
ACROSS THE DESERT SURFACE BEFORE IT SANK
INTO THE DRY, THIRSTY SAND!

IS EVERYONE OK?

COUGH! I SUPPOSE SO!



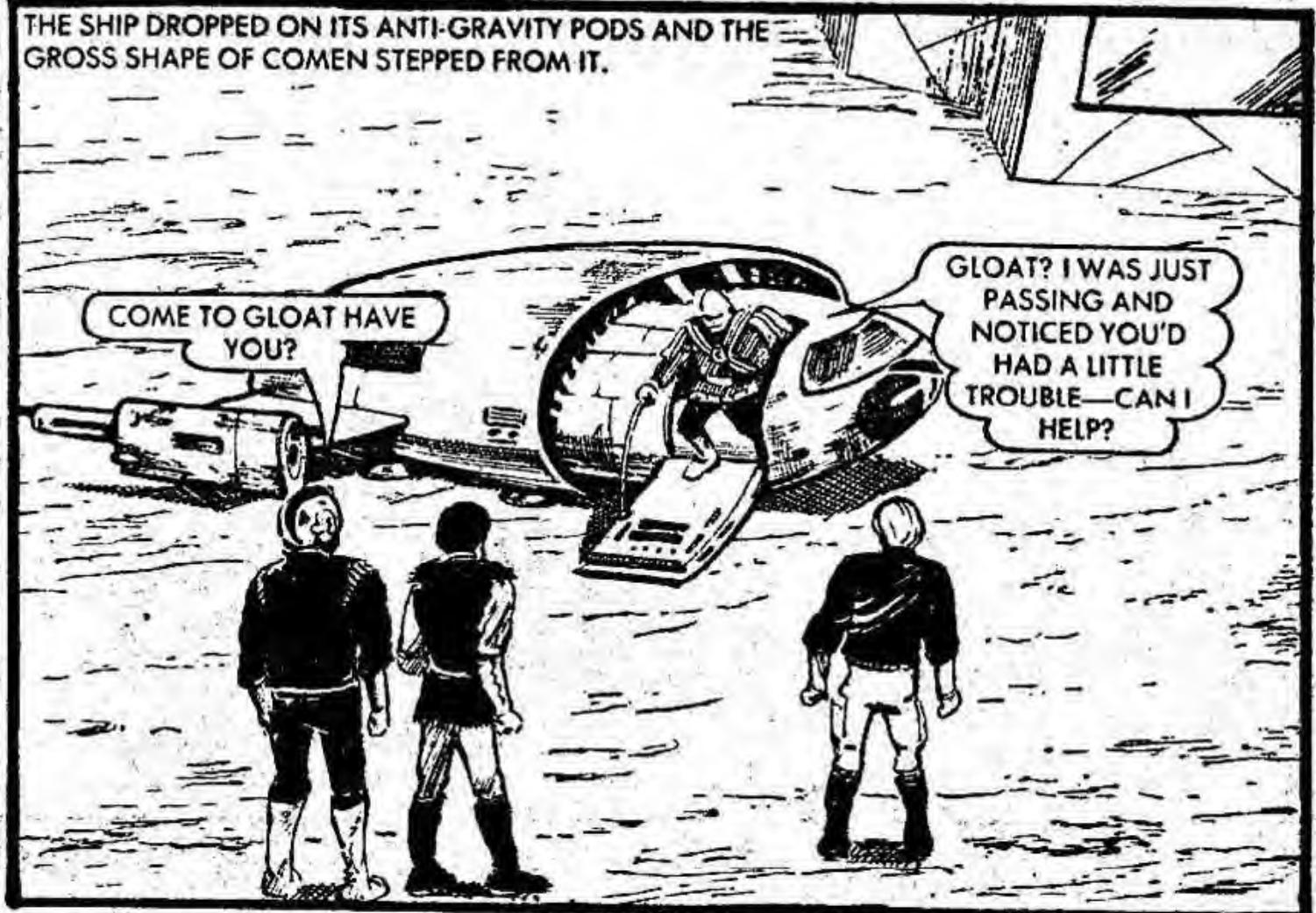




KORD WAS RIGHT. HARDLY HAD THEY REACHED THEIR CAMP WHEN A SMALL SHIP APPEARED IN THE SKY.



THE SHIP DROPPED ON ITS ANTI-GRAVITY PODS AND THE GROSS SHAPE OF COMEN STEPPED FROM IT.



SHALL WE SAY A FEW
TONS OF THYRILLIUM?



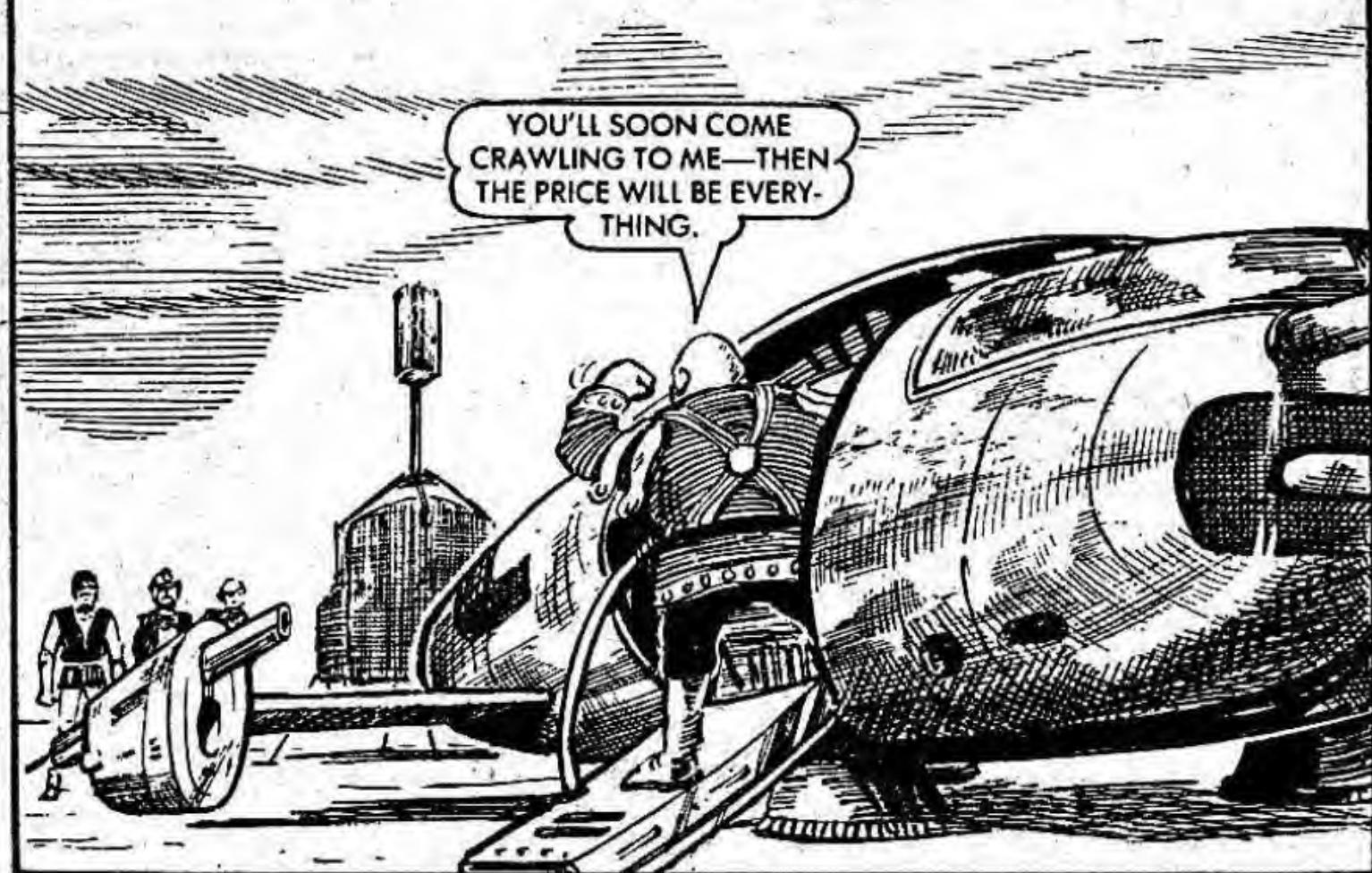
KORD'S PATIENCE SNAPPED AND HE LASHED OUT AT
THE SMIRKING COMEN!

LET'S SAY A FACEFUL OF FIST
INSTEAD, SHALL WE?



COMEN GOT TO HIS FEET SNARLING AND LURCHED INTO HIS SHIP.

YOU'LL SOON COME
CRAWLING TO ME—THEN
THE PRICE WILL BE EVERY-
THING.



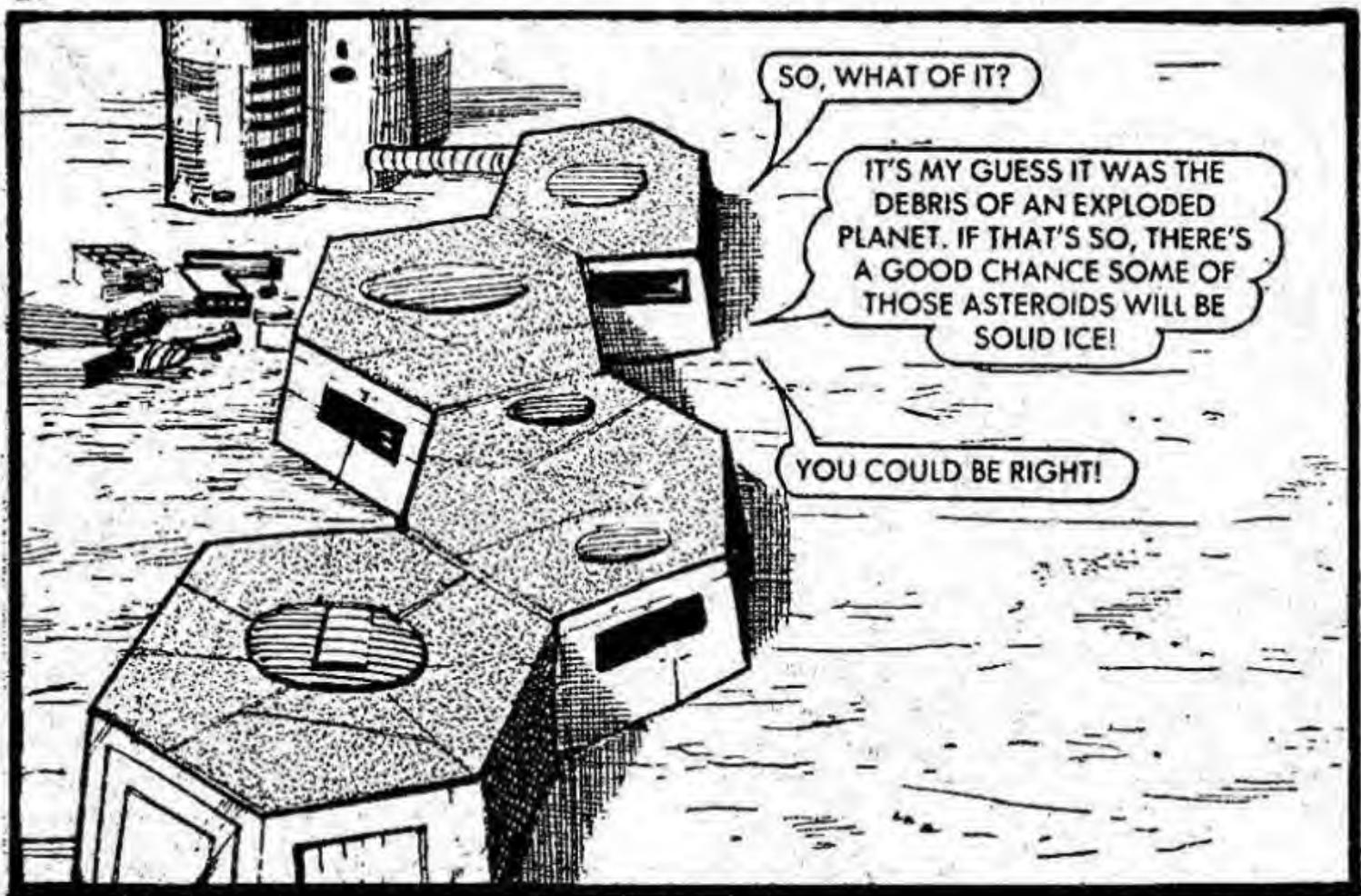


PUZZLED BY KORD'S GRIN, TABOR AND ORCA FOLLOWED HIM INTO THE CONTROL HUT.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WHEN WE CAME INTO THIS SOLAR SYSTEM WE MAPPED A 'CLOUD' OF ASTEROIDS IN SOLAR ORBIT. WE IGNORED IT BECAUSE OUR SURVEY SATELLITE HAD FOUND THIS PLANET WITH ITS ENORMOUS MINERAL POTENTIAL.



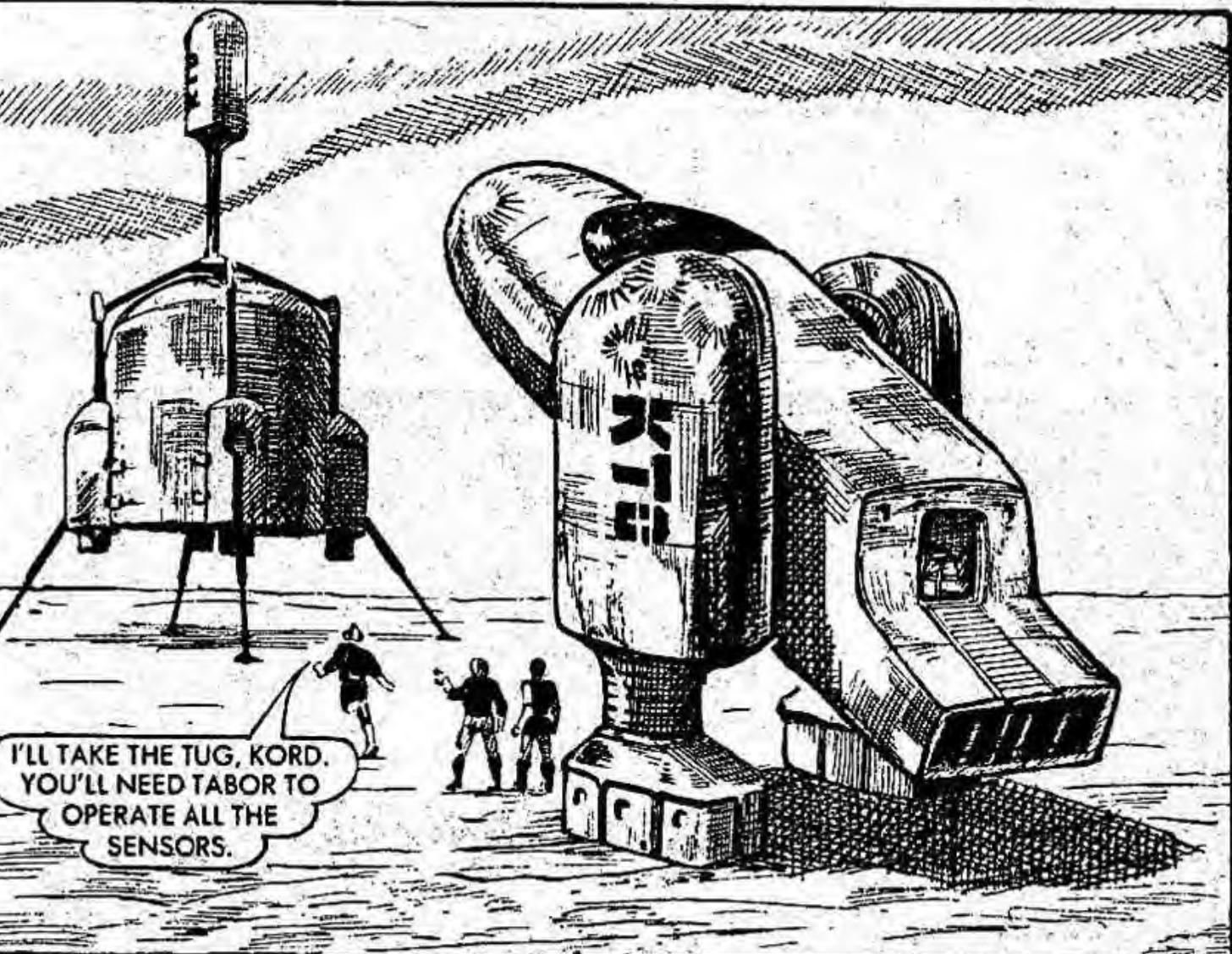


KORD TURNED TO THE WINDOW AND LOOKED AT THE SPACE-TUG.

THE TUG'S DESIGNED TO TOW CONTAINERS. ALL ITS ENGINE PODS HAVE EXTENDABLE COUPLINGS. IT'S SIMPLICITY ITSELF TO FIT THEM TO AN ICE ASTEROID AND TOW IT BACK ...

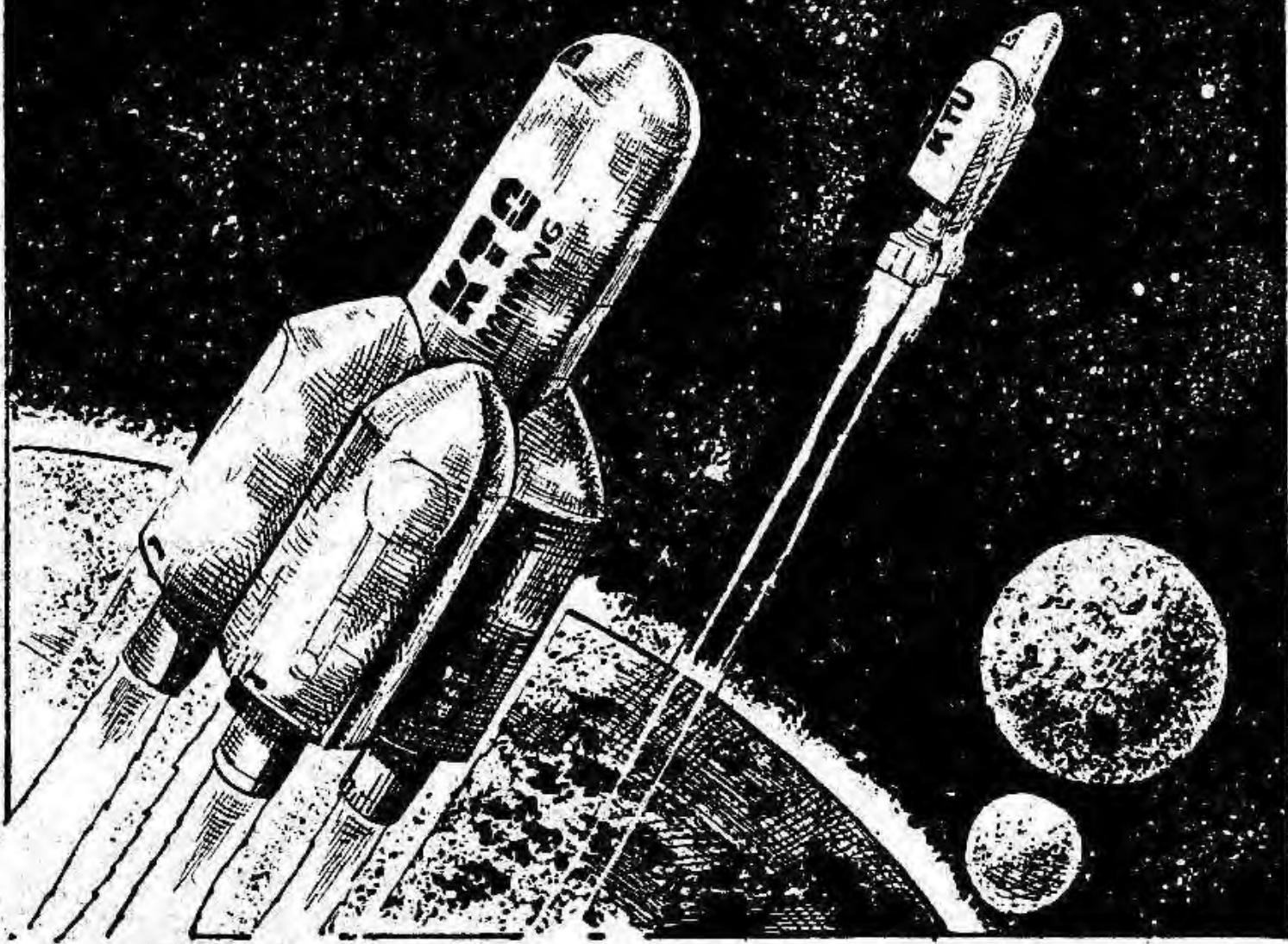
THE ASTRO-LOG SAYS THE ASTEROID ' CLOUD ' IS IN A FAVOURABLE POSITION FOR INTERCEPTION.

WELL WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? LET'S GO!



I'LL TAKE THE TUG, KORD.
YOU'LL NEED TABOR TO
OPERATE ALL THE
SENSORS.

WITHIN MINUTES THEY WERE
SPACEBOUND. THE TUG FOLDED
ITS ENGINES AND BLASTED OFF
AFTER THE SCOUTER.



HOURS LATER THEY REACHED THEIR
TARGET. THOUSANDS OF MILES
ACROSS, THE 'CLOUD' WAS
COMPOSED OF ROCKS OF ALL SIZES.

PHEW! THIS
WON'T BE EASY!

WE'LL BE ALL RIGHT AS LONG AS
WE REMEMBER TO TRAVEL THE
SAME WAY THE ASTEROIDS ARE
GOING.

THEN BEGAN A NIGHTMARE JOURNEY THROUGH THE ASTEROIDS. MOVING FRACTIONALLY FASTER THAN THE 'CLOUD', THEY INCHED THEIR WAY ALONG, SENSORS SEARCHING FOR ICE.



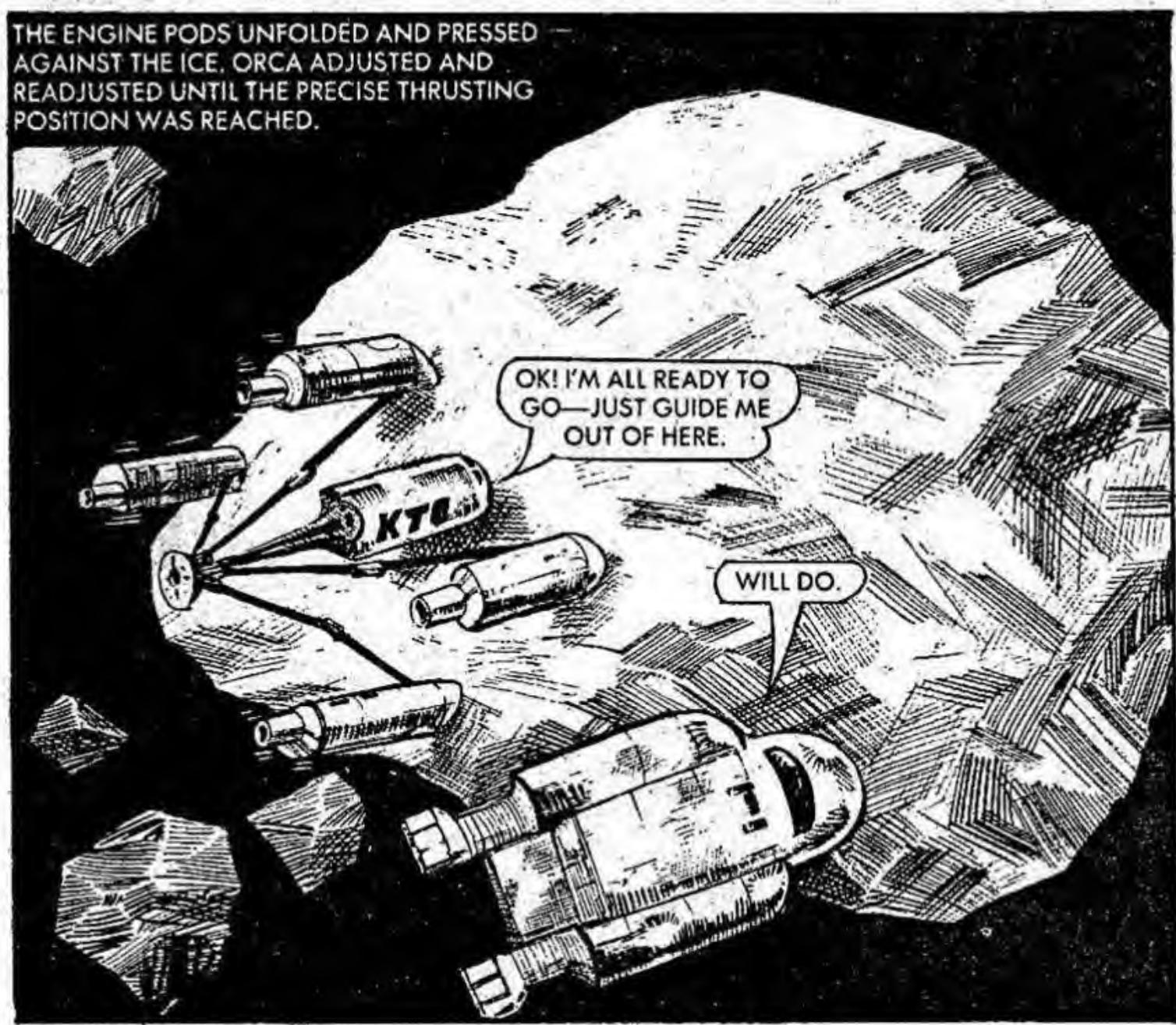
IT TOOK THREE DAYS TO GET A HOPEFUL READING.

I'M GETTING A
READING ON THE
STARBOARD FIVE
SENSOR.

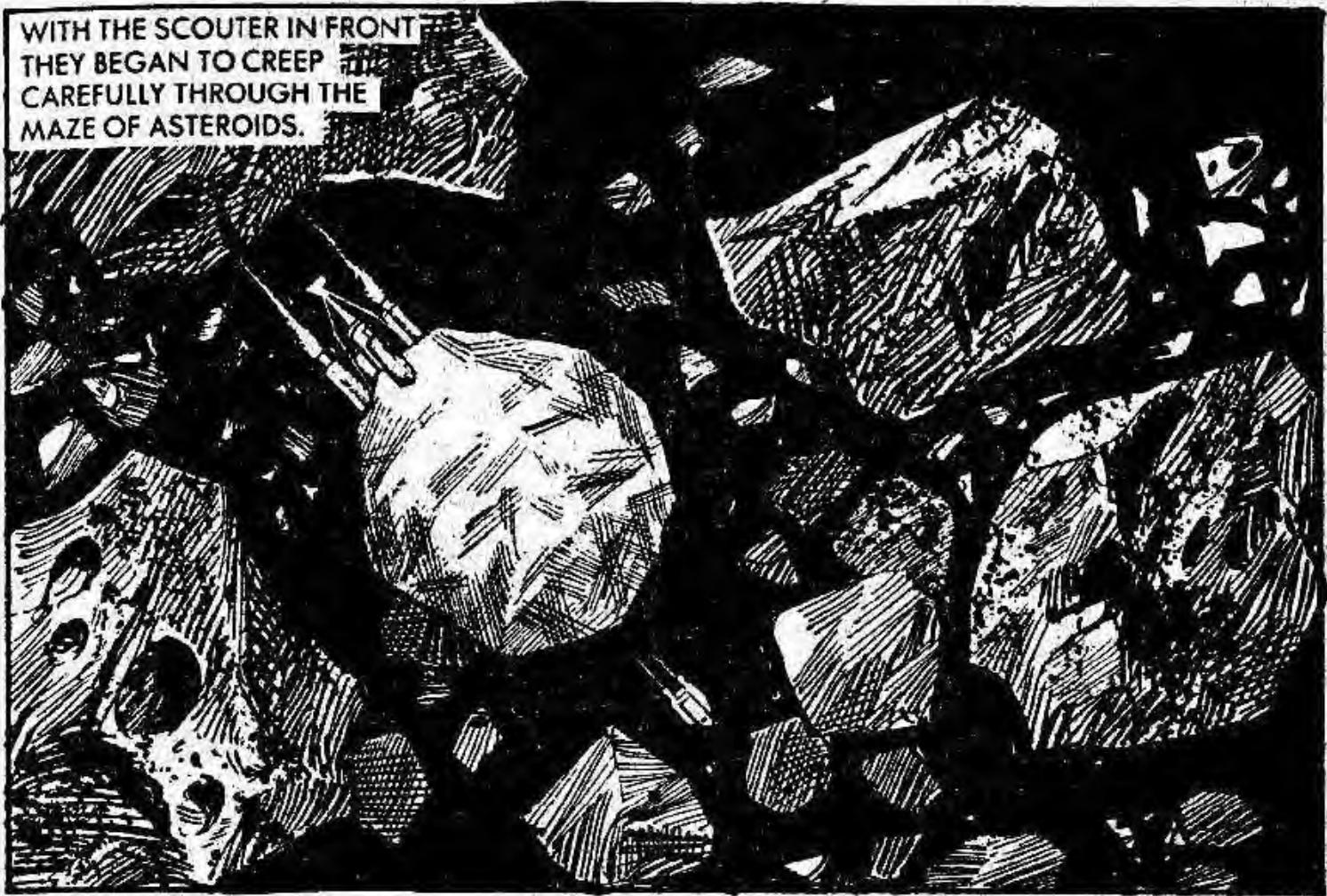




THE ENGINE PODS UNFOLDED AND PRESSED AGAINST THE ICE. ORCA ADJUSTED AND READJUSTED UNTIL THE PRECISE THRUSTING POSITION WAS REACHED.



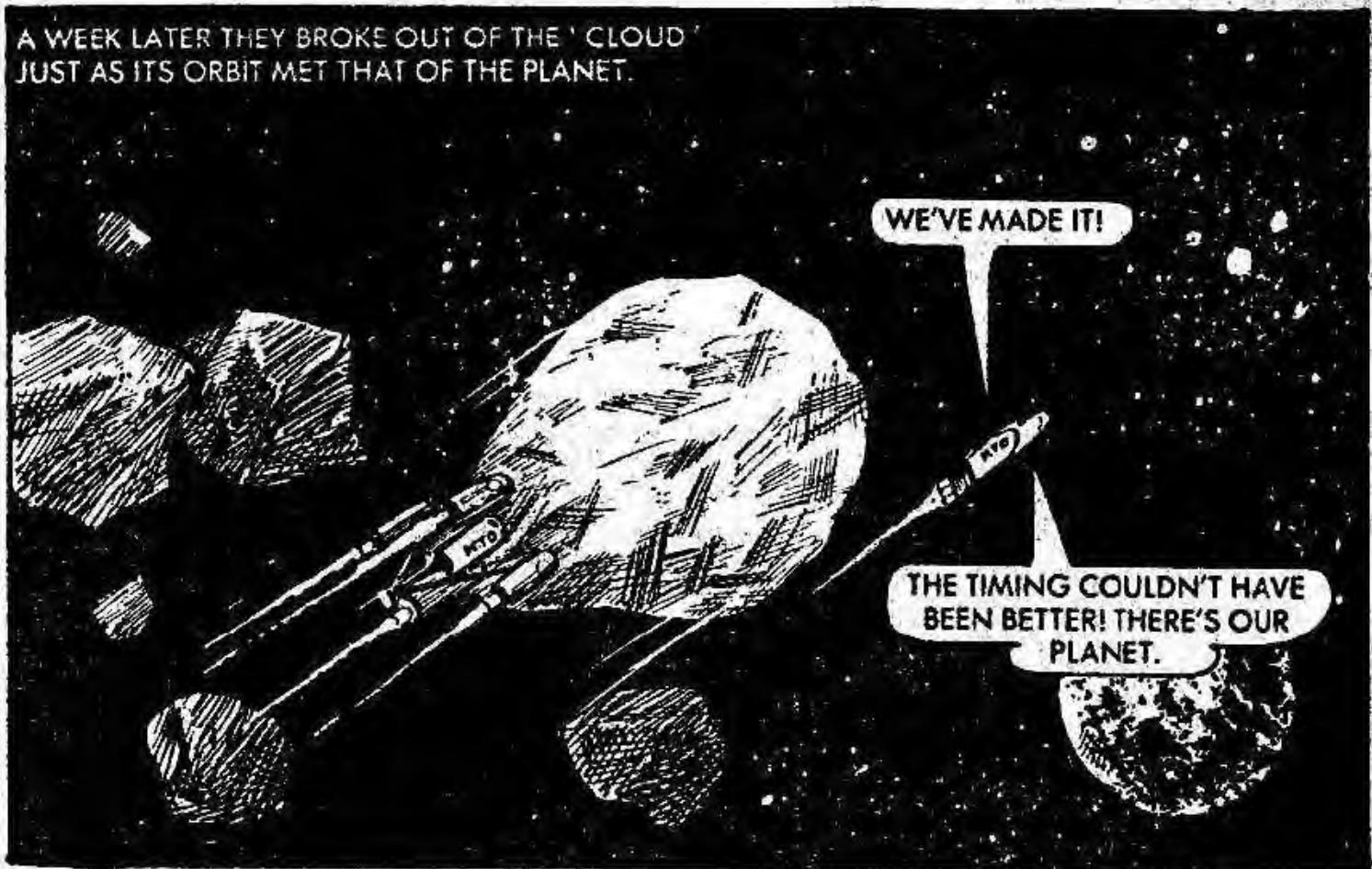
WITH THE SCOUTER IN FRONT
THEY BEGAN TO CREEP CAREFULLY THROUGH THE
MAZE OF ASTEROIDS.



A WEEK LATER THEY BROKE OUT OF THE 'CLOUD'
JUST AS ITS ORBIT MET THAT OF THE PLANET.

WE'VE MADE IT!

THE TIMING COULDN'T HAVE
BEEN BETTER! THERE'S OUR
PLANET.



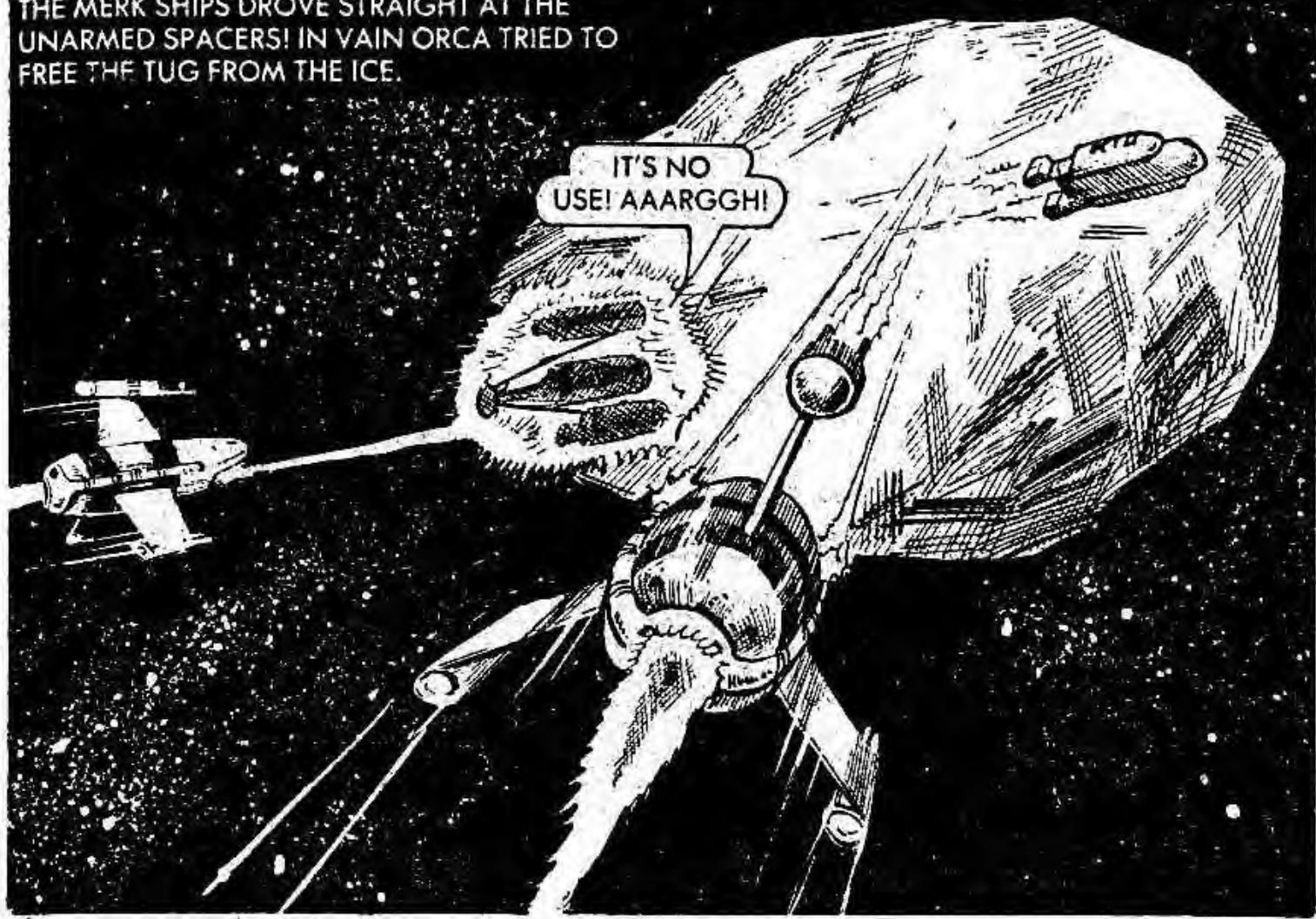


TWO HEAVILY ARMED CRAFT HEADED FOR THE SPACERS. THESE WERE SPACE MERCENARIES—MERKS—PIRATES AND HIRED KILLERS, WHO ROVED THE GALAXY.



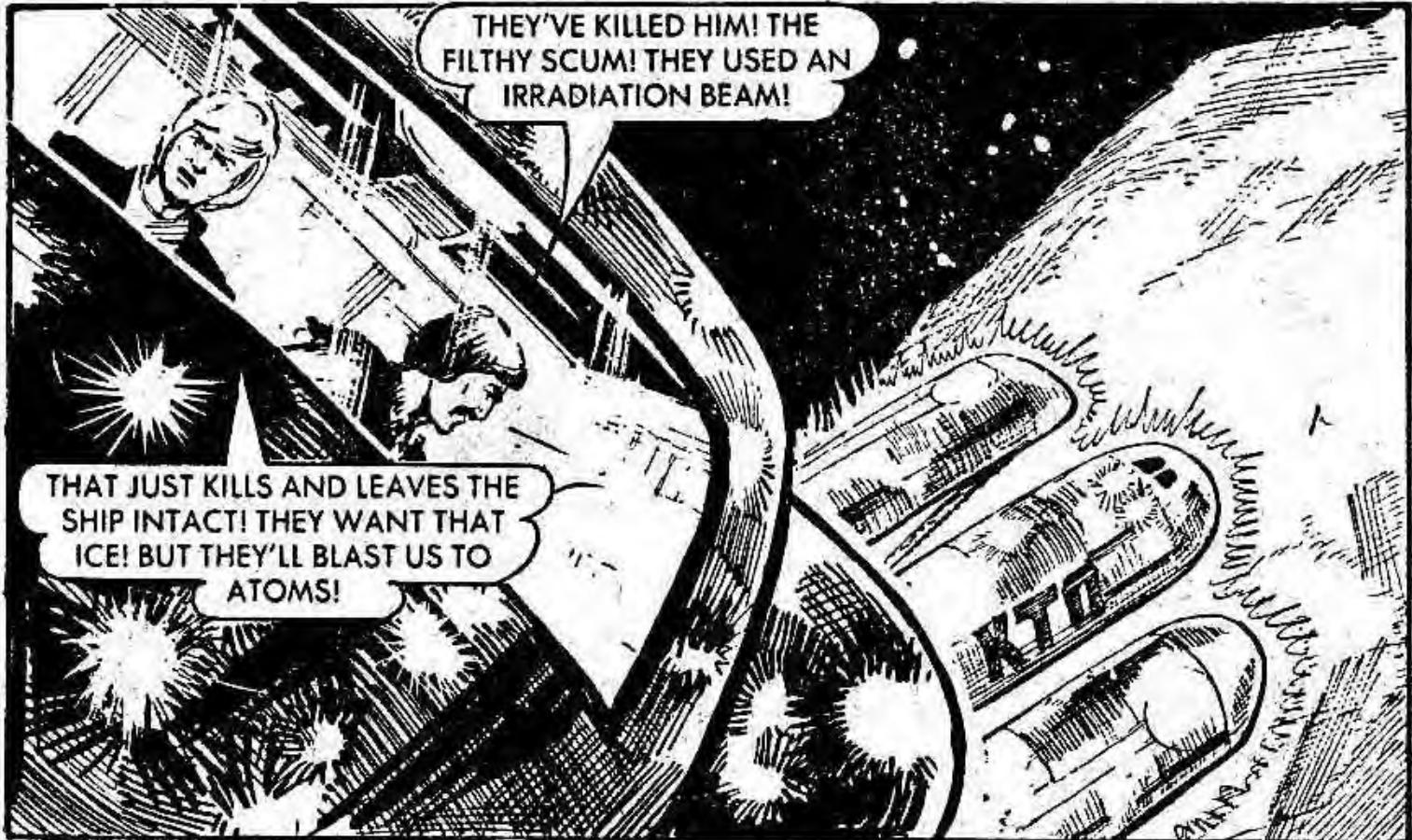
THE MERK SHIPS DROVE STRAIGHT AT THE UNARMED SPACERS! IN VAIN ORCA TRIED TO FREE THE TUG FROM THE ICE.

IT'S NO USE! AAARGGH!

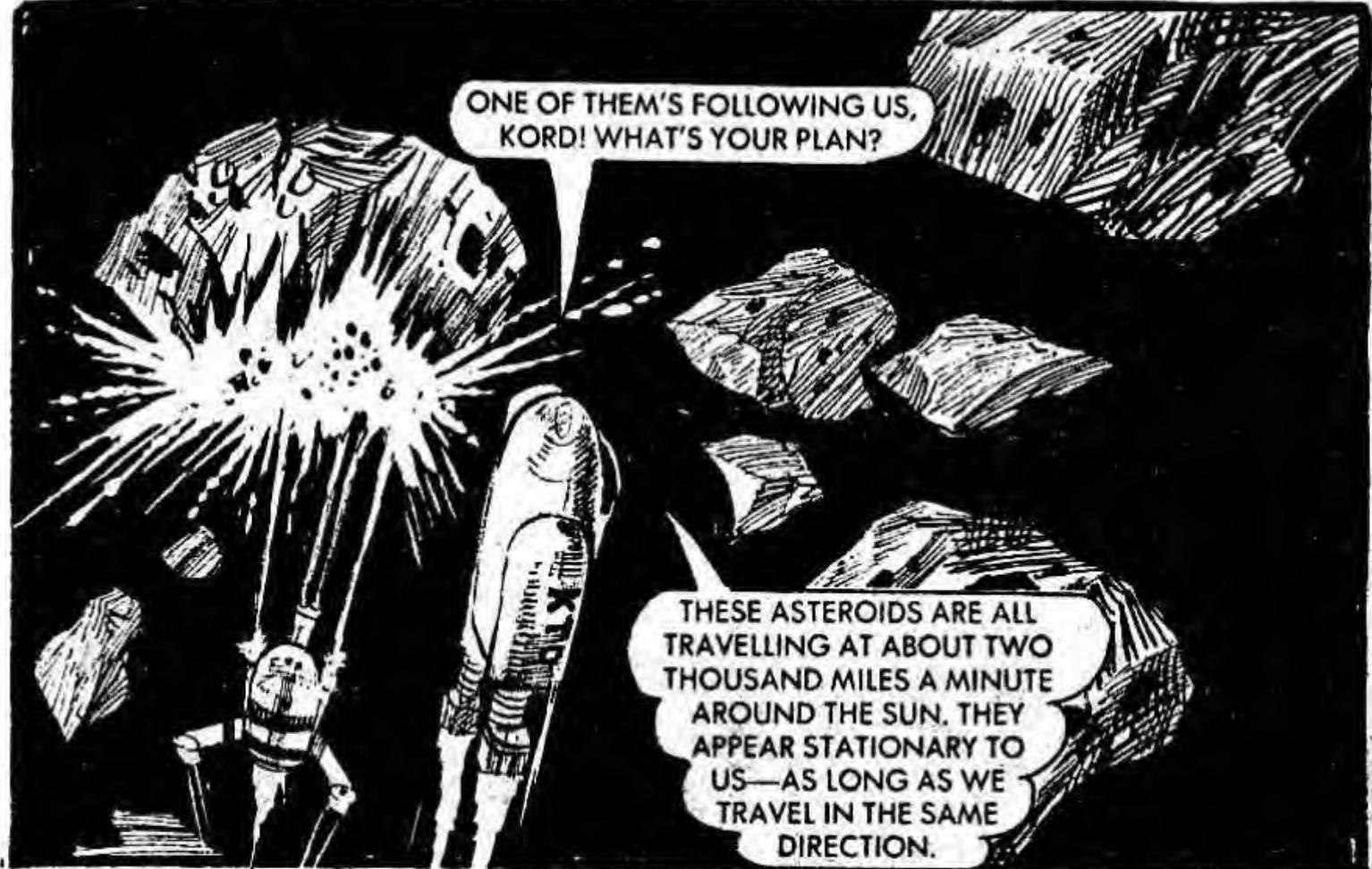


THEY'VE KILLED HIM! THE FILTHY SCUM! THEY USED AN IRRADIATION BEAM!

THAT JUST KILLS AND LEAVES THE SHIP INTACT! THEY WANT THAT ICE! BUT THEY'LL BLAST US TO ATOMS!







ONE OF THEM'S FOLLOWING US,
KORD! WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

THESE ASTEROIDS ARE ALL
TRAVELLING AT ABOUT TWO
THOUSAND MILES A MINUTE
AROUND THE SUN. THEY
APPEAR STATIONARY TO
US—AS LONG AS WE
TRAVEL IN THE SAME
DIRECTION.



I SEE! IF WE TURN ROUND THEY'LL
RUSH AT US AT THAT SPEED PLUS
OUR OWN! IT'LL BE LIKE
DRIVING UP AN AVALANCHE!

YOU'VE GOT THE IDEA.
WE MIGHT MAKE THE MERK
SHIP CRASH!

SUDDENLY KORD SPUN THE LITTLE SCOUTER
INTO THE FLOW OF THE ASTEROIDS!
AUTOMATICALLY THE MERKS FOLLOWED!

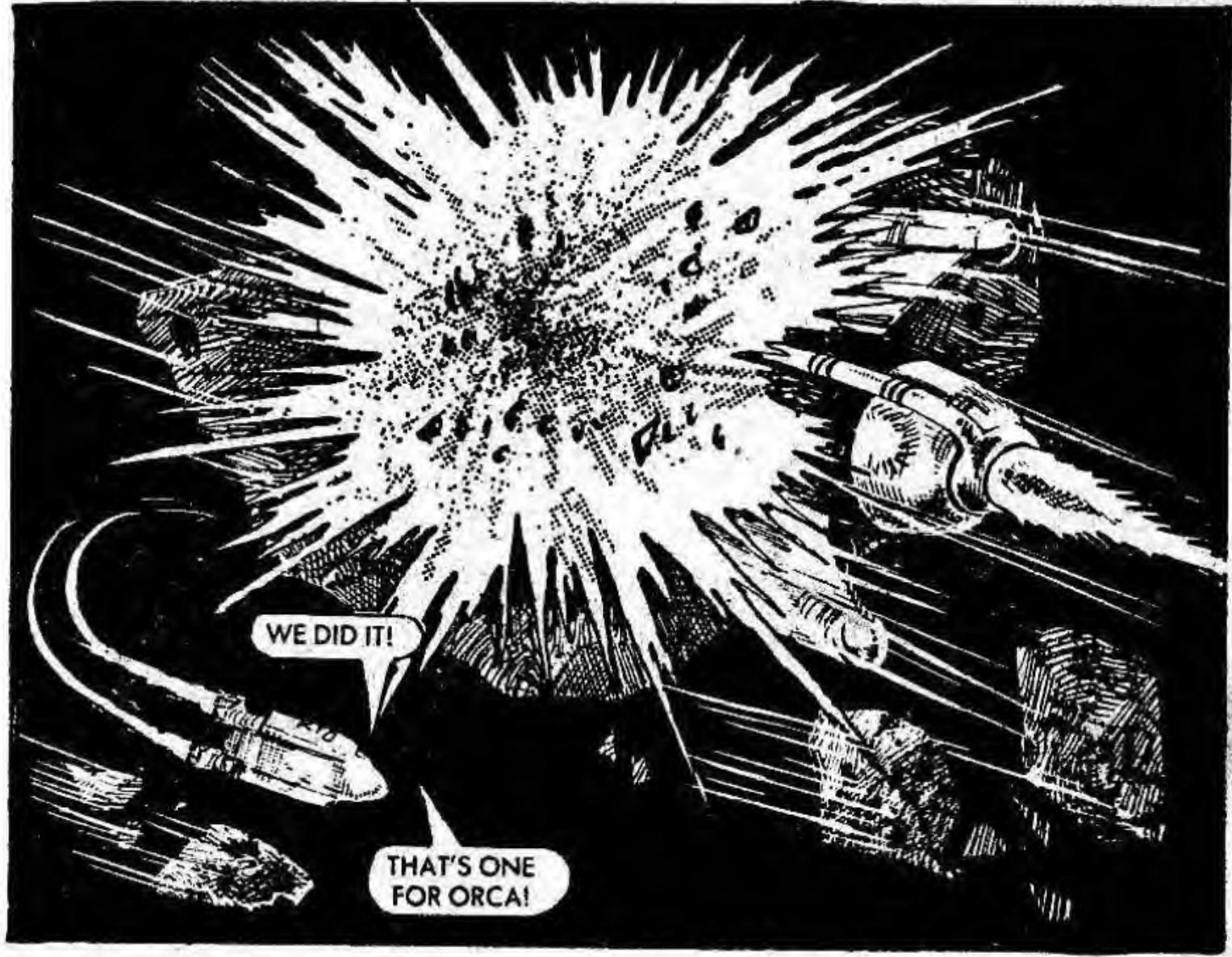
HANG ON!



TOO LATE THE MERK COMMANDER REALISED HIS MISTAKE!

ARRGH! NO! TURN BACK!
TURN BACK! IT'S A
TRICK!





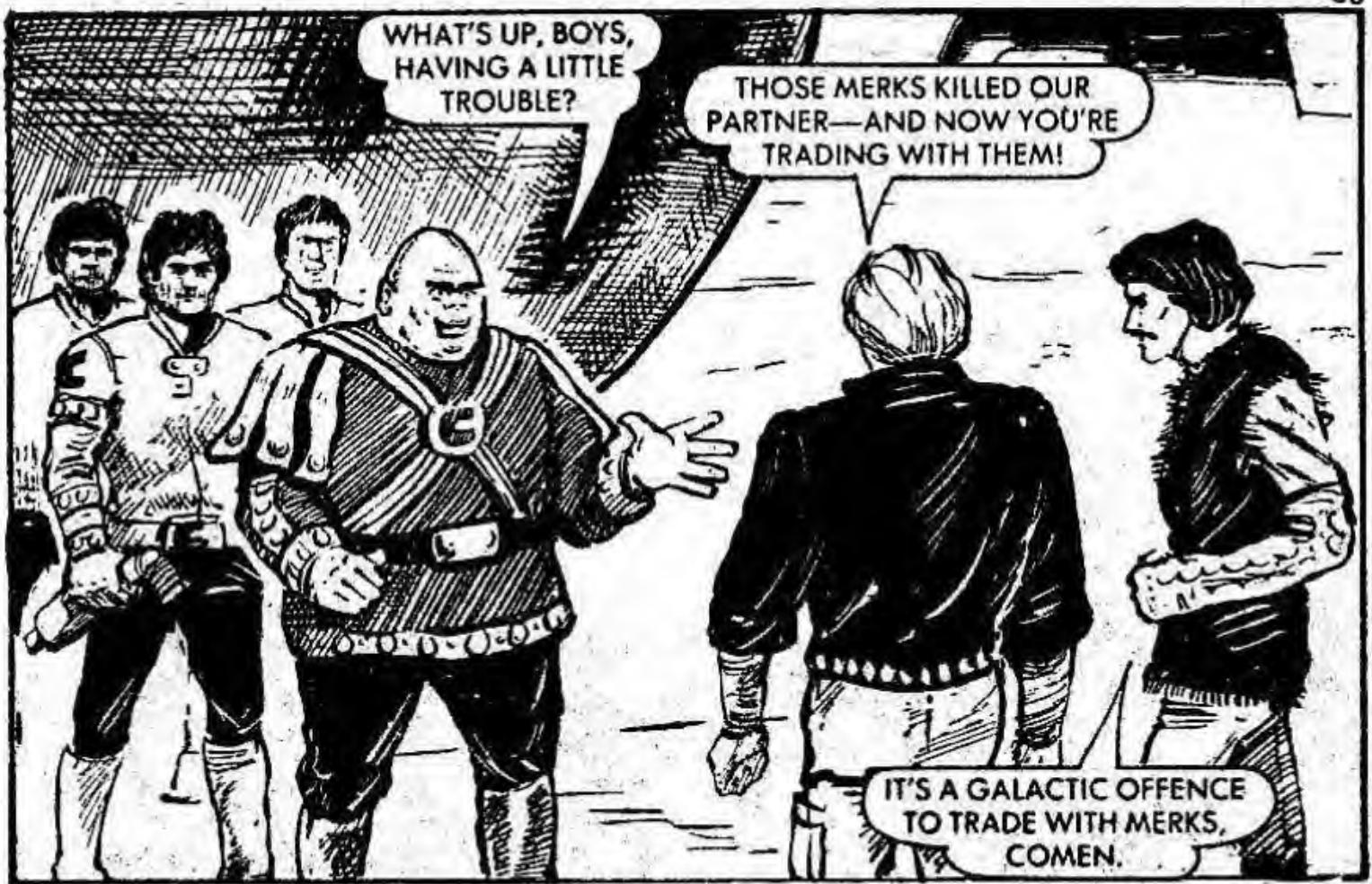
THEY FOUND THE ICE ORBITING THE PLANET—BUT ALONGSIDE THE MERK CRAFT WAS A COMEN SHIP.

THEY'RE SELLING THE ASTEROID TO COMEN'S SYNDICATE!

WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING UP HERE.
WE'LL LAND AND CONFRONT COMEN.

THAT'S COMEN'S SHIP!

LOOKS AS IF HE'S BEEN EXPECTING US.



EVEN AS HE SPOKE THE TWO SPACERS LEAPT INTO ACTION!



THE TWO MERKS FELL UNDER THE SUDDEN
ONSLAUGHT BUT ONE OF COMEN'S
HIRELINGS HURLED A SMALL BLACK OBJECT
TOWARDS THE TWO SPACERS.

LOOK OUT,
KORD! GRENADE!



THE AIR AROUND KORD AND TABOR SCREAMED WITH VIBRATIONS UNTIL THEY COLLAPSED INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

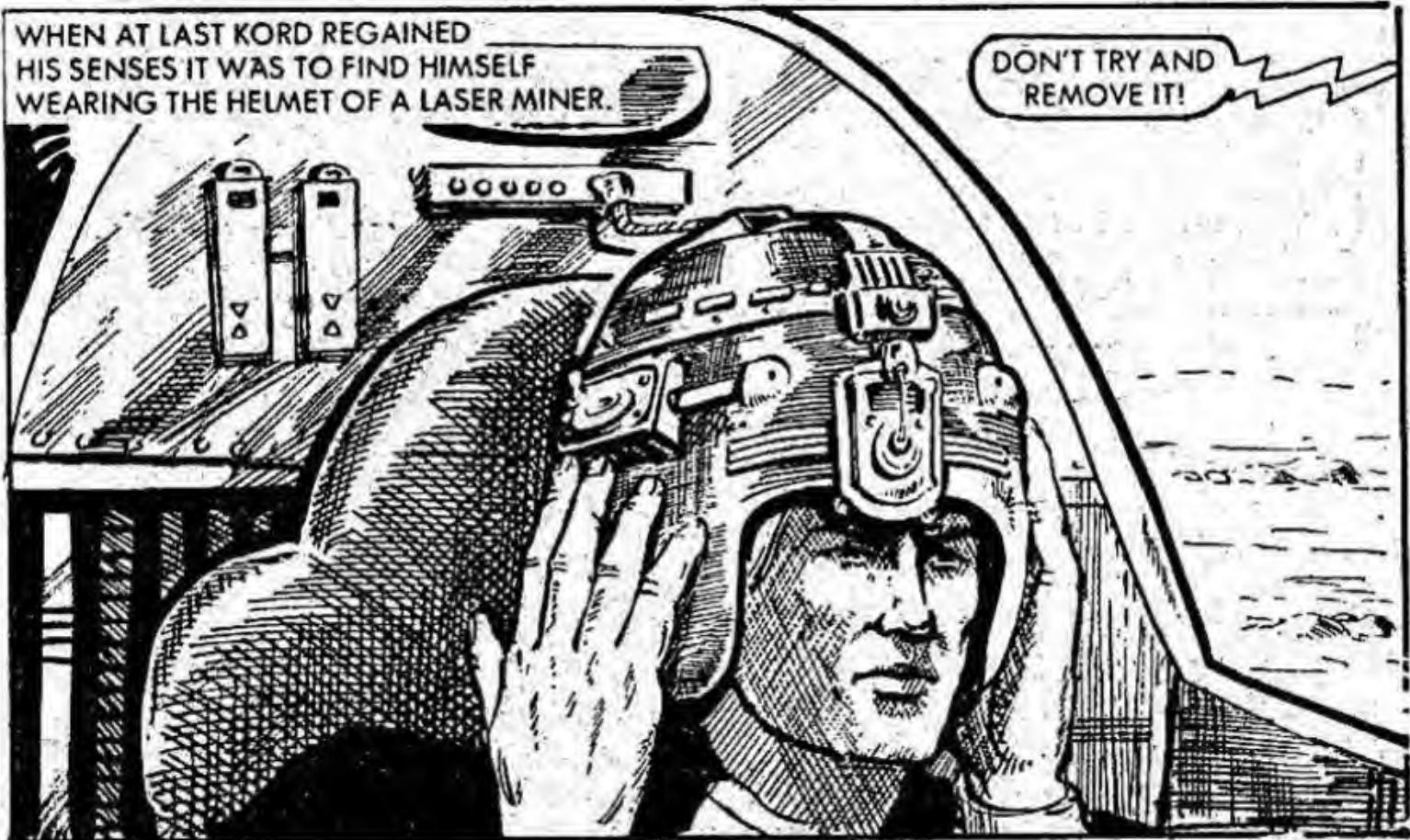


THAT STUN GRENADE STOPPED 'EM, BOSS. DO WE KILL THEM NOW?



WHEN AT LAST KORD REGAINED HIS SENSES IT WAS TO FIND HIMSELF WEARING THE HELMET OF A LASER MINER.

DON'T TRY AND REMOVE IT!





WHEN COMEN LEFT THE SPACERS BEGAN TO WORK BY CONTROLLING THE MACHINES WITH THOUGHT WAVES. THEY KNEW THAT STOPPING THE LASERS WOULD AUTOMATICALLY DETONATE THE BOMBS!

I WAGER THE DARK-HAIRED ONE TIRES FIRST!

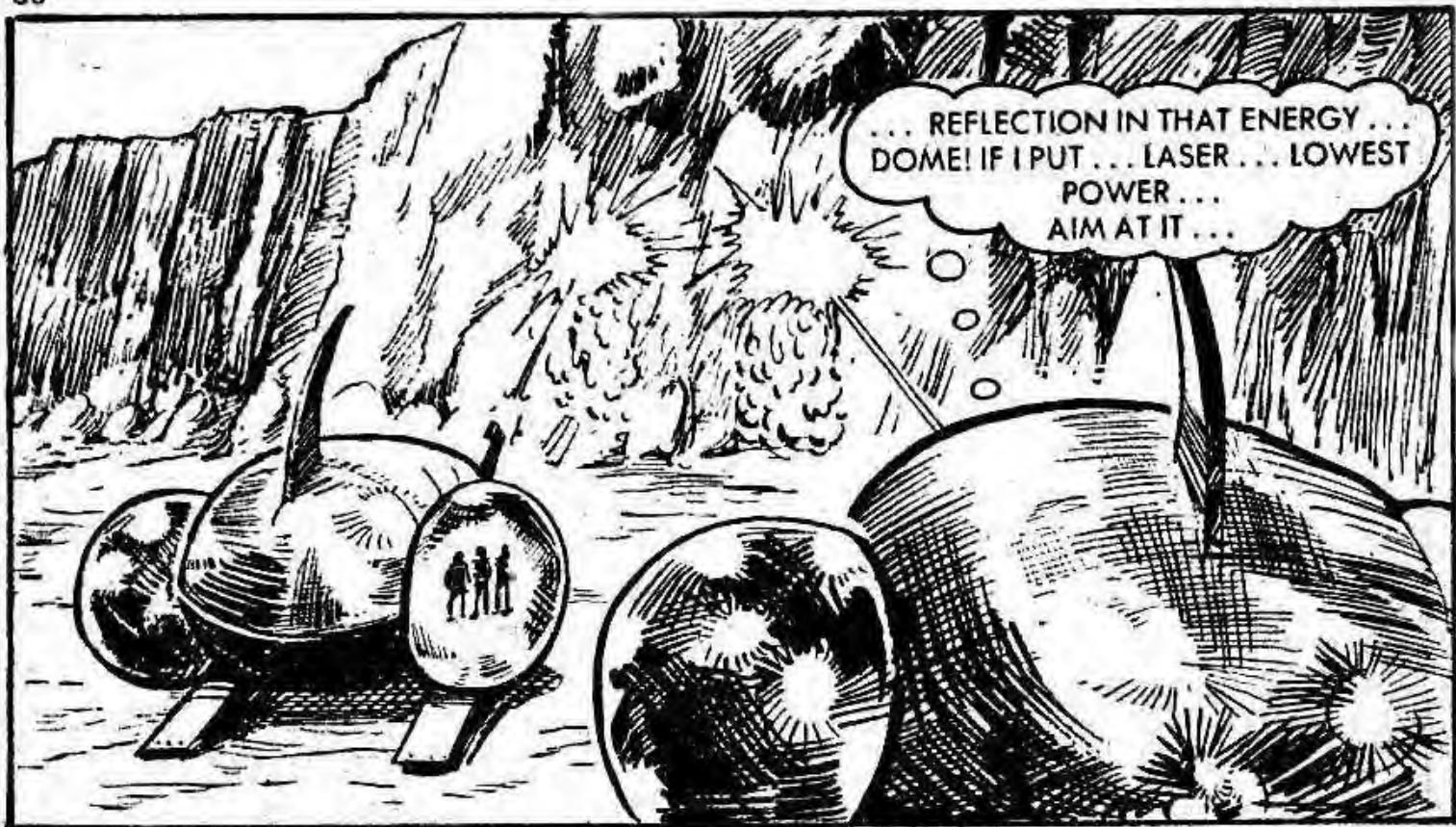


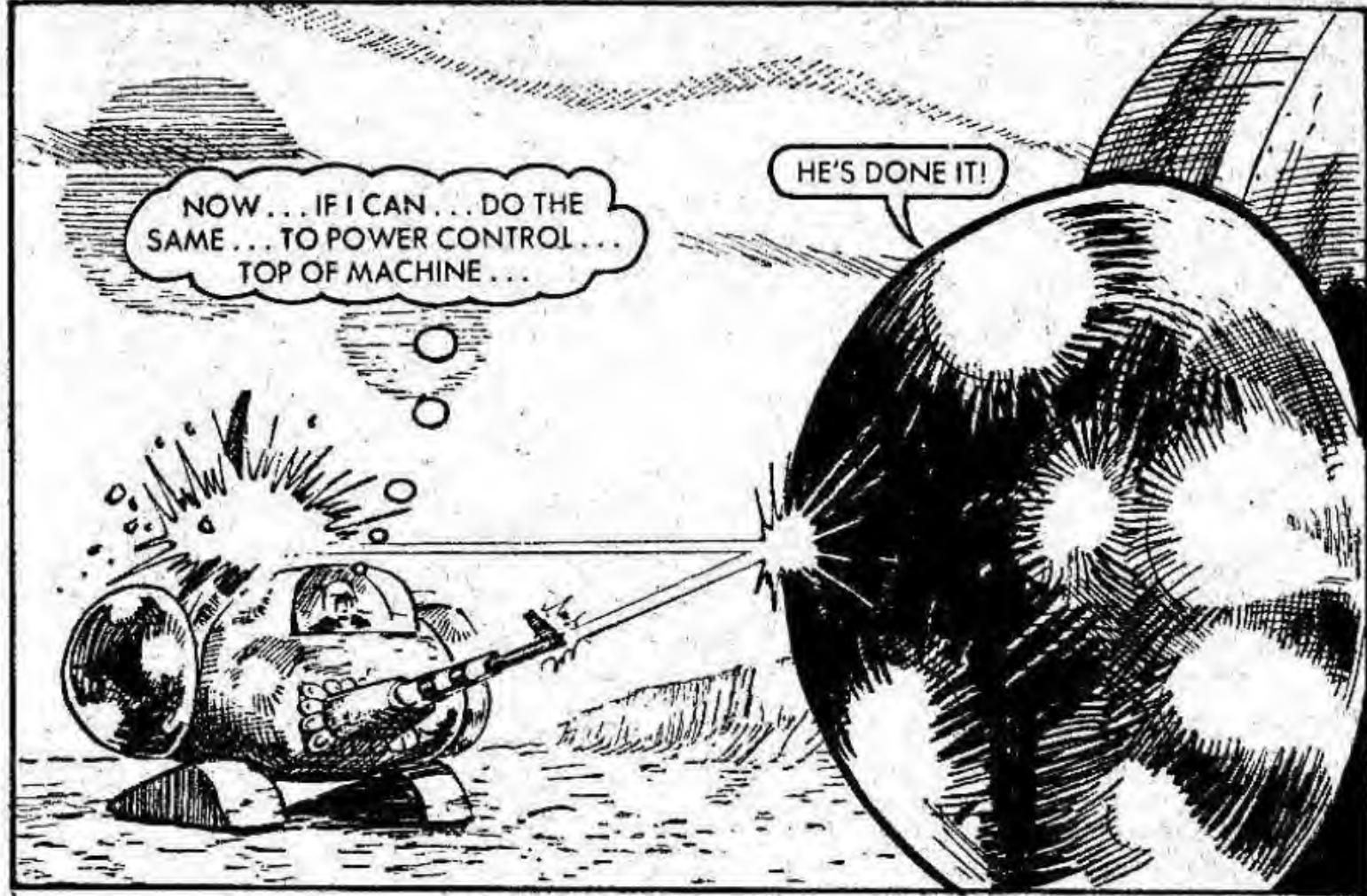
MY MONEY'S ON THE ONE CALLED KORD!

THE HOURS DRAGGED BY. KORD FELT HIS CONCENTRATION SLIPPING. HE KNEW THEY COULDN'T LAST MUCH LONGER.

MUST FIND A WAY OUT...
CAN'T TURN LASERS... AROUND
TO GET... THEM... WAIT...
LASERS ARE LIGHT...

IF I CAN GET SLIGHTLY...
BEHIND TABOR...
I CAN SEE MERKS...





IT WAS THE WORK OF SECONDS FOR KORD TO RELEASE HIMSELF FROM THE NOW HARMLESS HELMET AND FREE TABOR.

I THINK WE'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE COMEN REALISES SOMETHING'S WRONG!

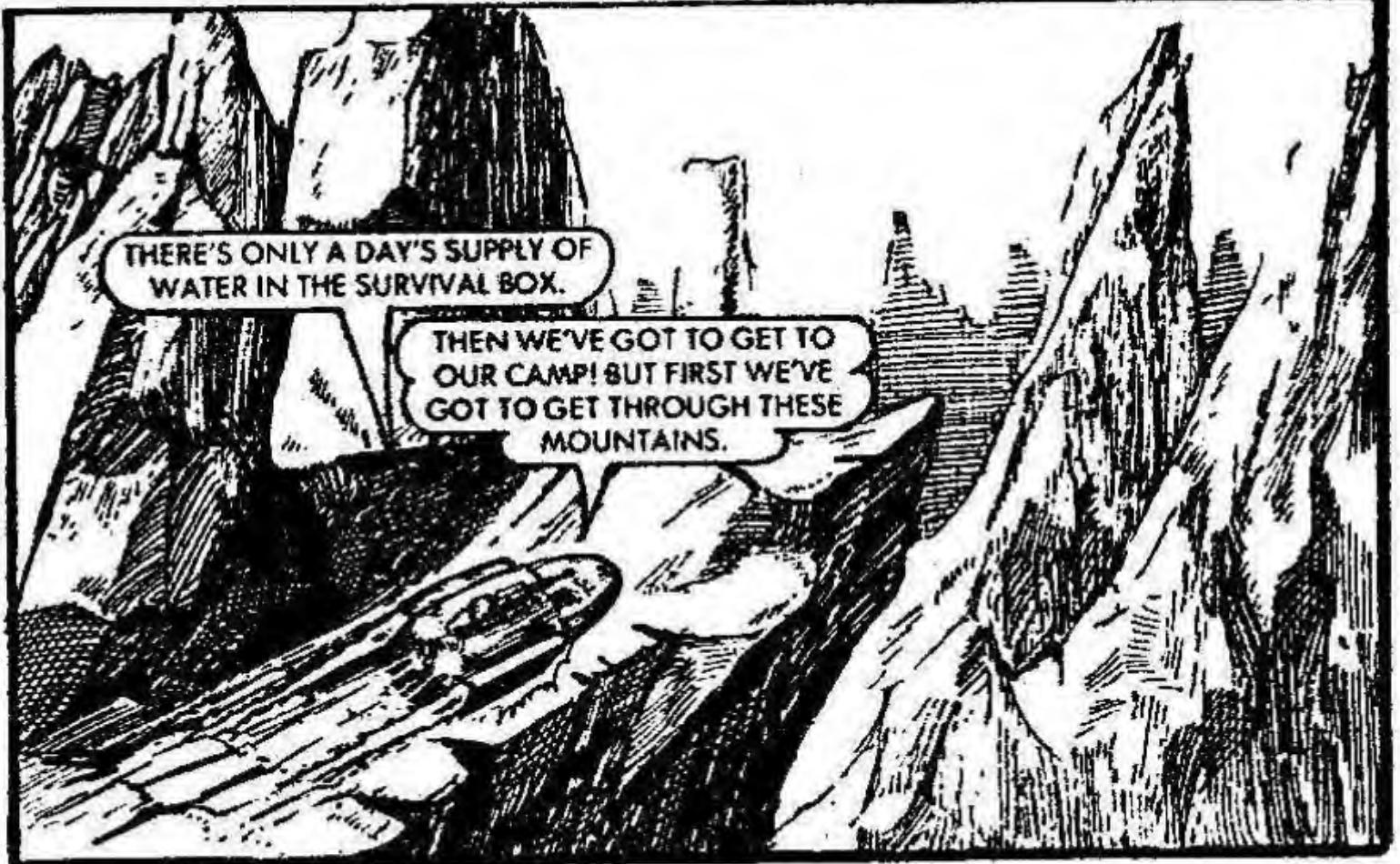
YOU'RE RIGHT. THERE'S THE MERK HOVER-BUG OVER THERE, WE'LL TAKE THAT!





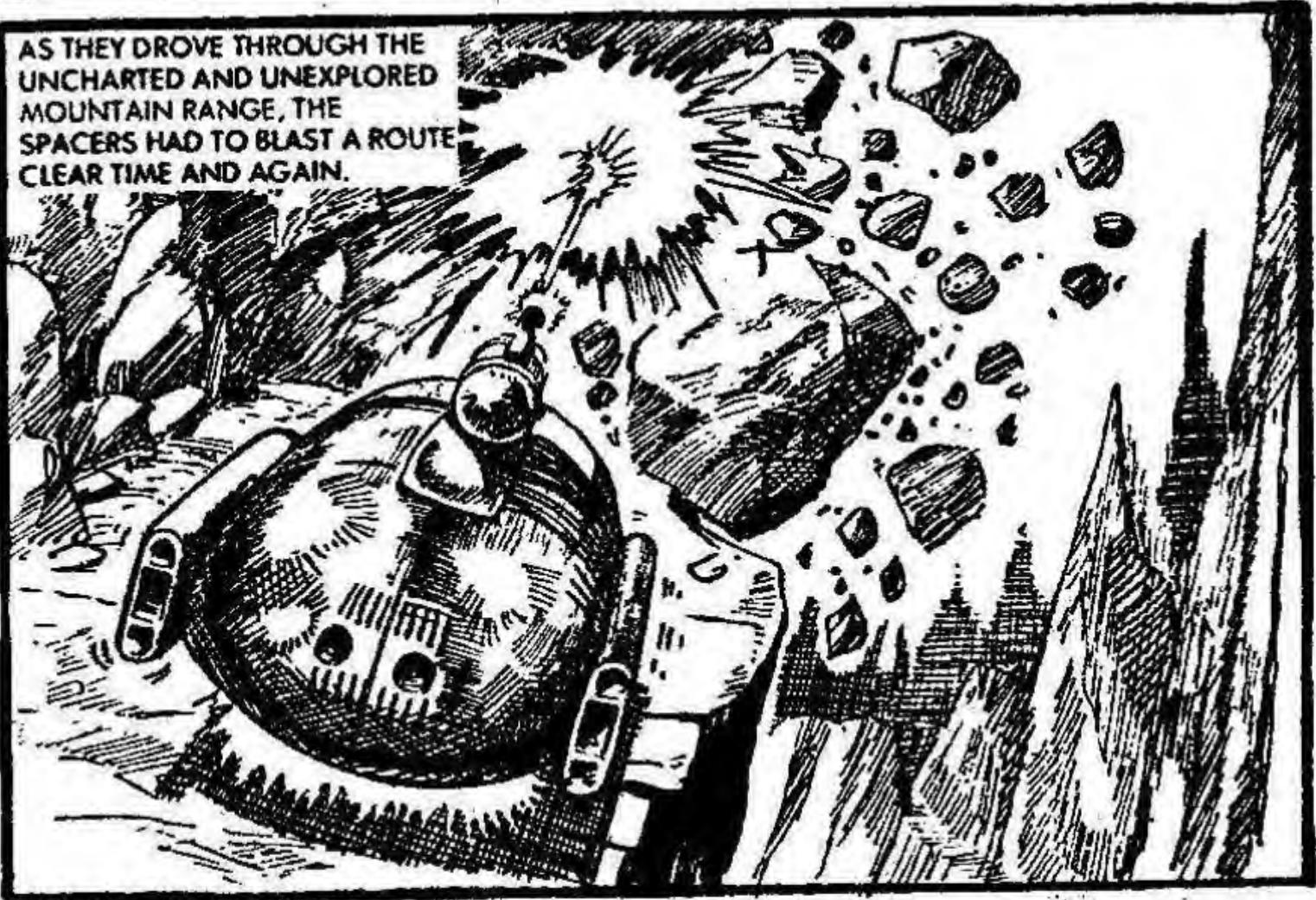
THEN THEY WERE IN THE HOVER-BUG AND STREAKING ACROSS THE DESERT TO THE FAR OFF MOUNTAINS THAT DIVIDED THEIR CLAIM FROM COMEN'S.





THERE'S ONLY A DAY'S SUPPLY OF
WATER IN THE SURVIVAL BOX.

THEN WE'VE GOT TO GET TO
OUR CAMP! BUT FIRST WE'VE
GOT TO GET THROUGH THESE
MOUNTAINS.



AS THEY DROVE THROUGH THE
UNCHARTED AND UNEXPLORED
MOUNTAIN RANGE, THE
SPACERS HAD TO BLAST A ROUTE
CLEAR TIME AND AGAIN.

AS NIGHT FELL AND THE TRIPLE MOONS OF SARANA ROSE, THEY THANKFULLY STOPPED AND MADE CAMP.



THEY FELL INTO A DEEP, EXHAUSTED SLEEP FROM WHICH KORD WAS AWAKENED BY A CURIOUS GRATING SOUND.









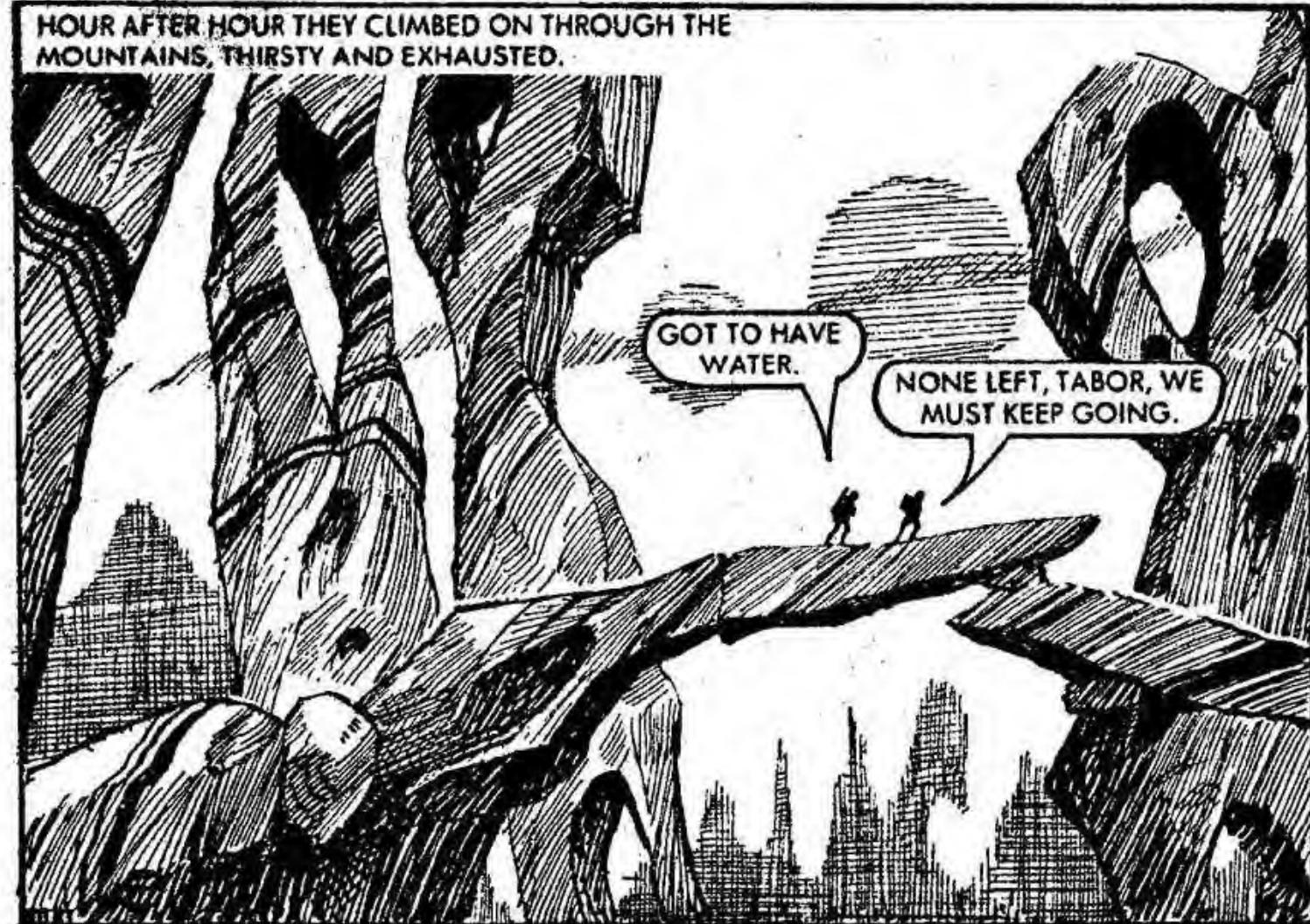
THEY SET TO WORK STRIPPING THE BUG OF USEFUL ITEMS. AS DAWN BROKE A HORDE OF THE CRYSTAL CREATURES RUMBLED SWIFTLY TOWARDS THEM.

THERE'S HUNDREDS
OF THEM!

TIME WE LEFT! THEY MOVE
TOO QUICKLY FOR MY
LIKING!



HOUR AFTER HOUR THEY CLIMBED ON THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS, THIRSTY AND EXHAUSTED.



KORD PAUSED TO CHECK THE AUTOCOMPASS HE'D TAKEN FROM THE BUG. THERE CAME A LOUD ' CRACK ' AND HE LOOKED UP TO SEE A SHOWER OF SMALL ROCKS ERUPTING FROM A LARGE ROCK.



THEY FELL DOWN ON THE UNSUSPECTING SPACER STICKING TO HIS CLOTHING AND FLESH!



AGAIN THE ROCK ERUPTED BUT THIS TIME KORD UNLEASHED A FULL ENERGY BLAST FROM HIS CANNON.

ARE YOU OK,
TABOR?

URRGH! YES, I THINK SO!

THAT 'THING' FIRED THOSE AS WE APPROACHED. THEY MUST BE SPORES OR SEEDS DESIGNED TO CLING TO ANY MOVING OBJECT.

SOUNDS REASONABLE! HEY,
LOOK AT THIS!





BUT TABOR DIDN'T ANSWER. HE STARED IN DISBELIEF AS A HORDE OF THE CRYSTAL CREATURES SWARMED INTO VIEW.

WHAT'S YOUR EXPLANATION FOR THIS, KORD?





THEY ATE THE IRON PARTS OF THE BUG,
REMEMBER? IRON'S FOOD TO THEM—AND OUR
BODIES CONTAIN IRON! WE'LL NEVER SHAKE
THEM OFF! BUT WE CAN MOVE FASTER THAN
THEY CAN!



THE SPACERS HURRIED ON UNTIL AT LAST THEY
SIGHTED THE DESERT PLAIN AND THEIR CLAIM IN
THE DISTANCE.

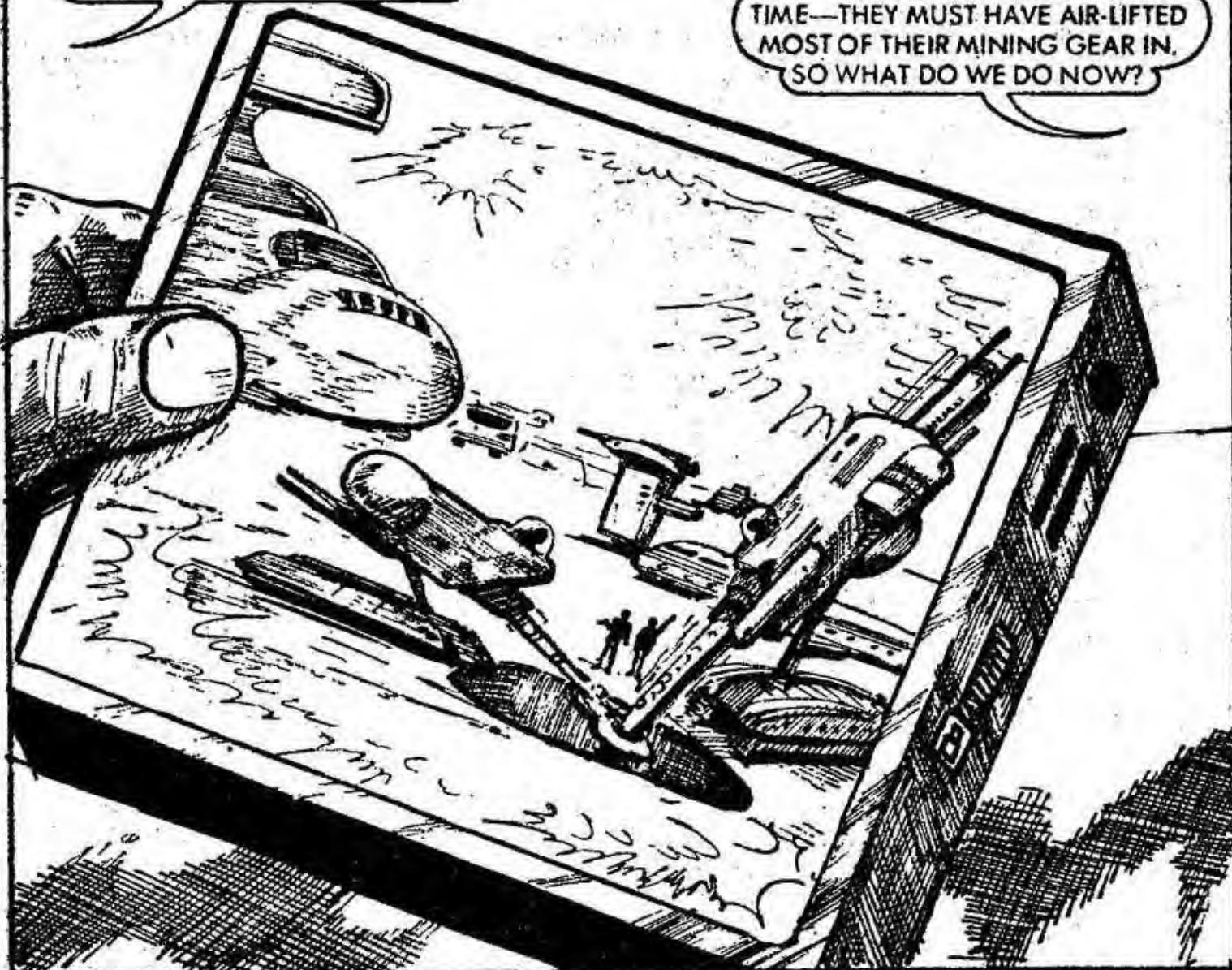


AS THEY GOT NEARER THEY REALISED SOMETHING WAS WRONG. TAKING A ZOOM VIEWER FROM HIS PACK, KORD EXAMINED THE SCENE.



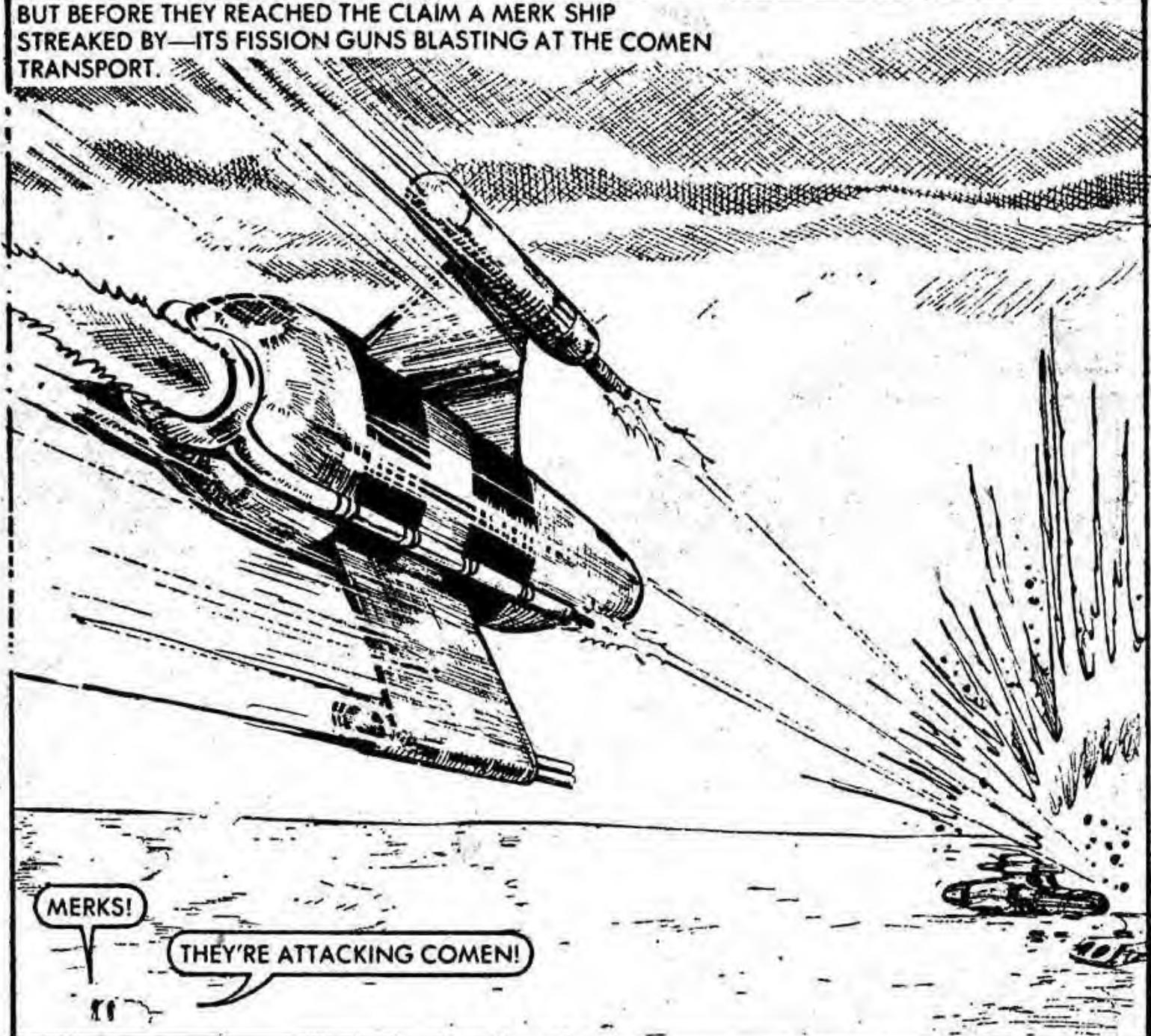
LOOKS AS IF THEY'VE BEEN
MINING OUR THYRILLIUM FIND.

AND THEY HAVEN'T WASTED ANY
TIME—THEY MUST HAVE AIR-LIFTED
MOST OF THEIR MINING GEAR IN.
SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?





BUT BEFORE THEY REACHED THE CLAIM A MERK SHIP STREAKED BY—ITS FISSION GUNS BLASTING AT THE COMEN TRANSPORT.



AGAIN AND AGAIN THE MERKS ATTACKED UNTIL ALL THE COMEN TRANSPORTS WERE DESTROYED.



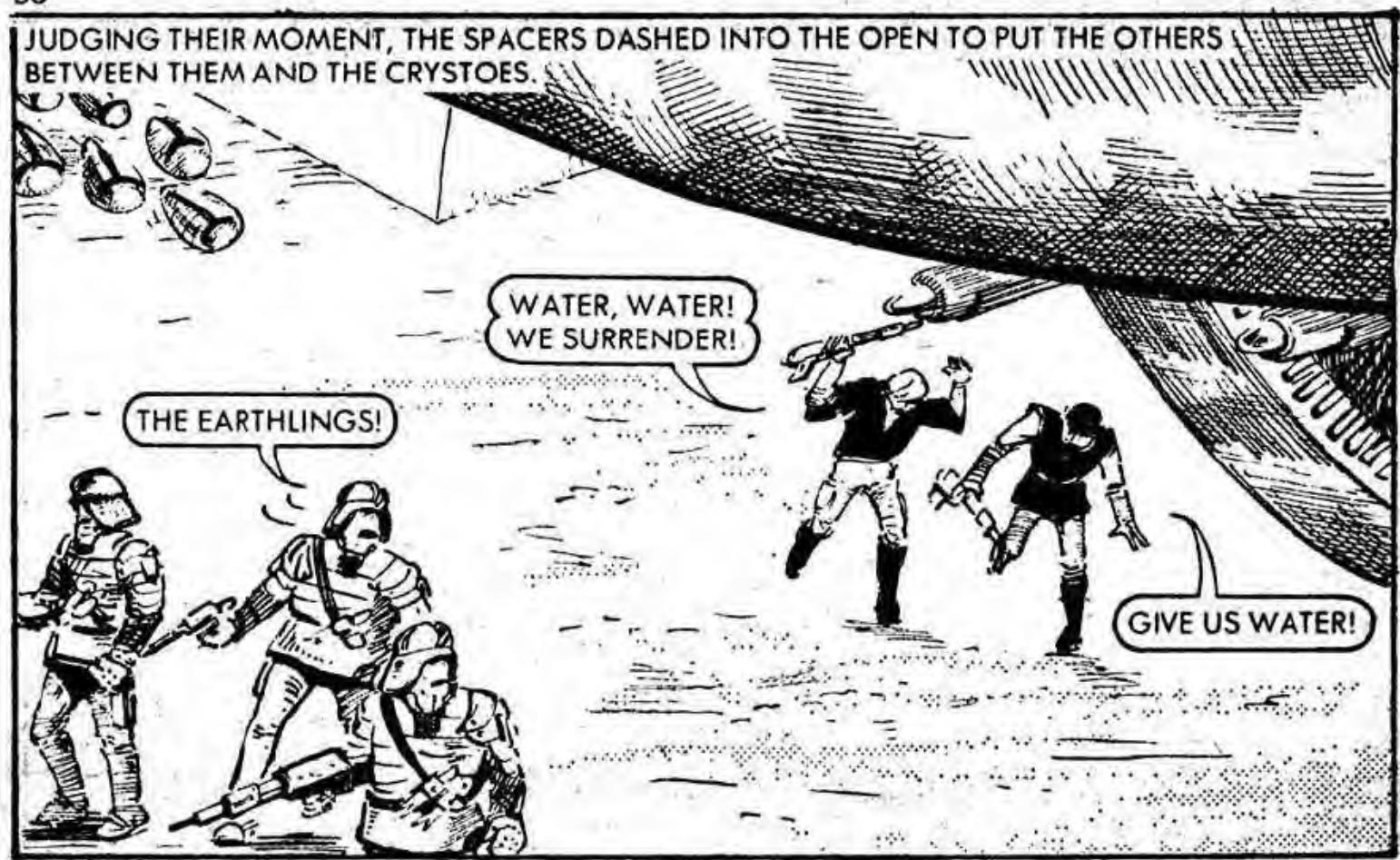
SATISFIED WITH THEIR WORK THE MERKS LANDED AND ROUNDED UP THE DAZED MINERS.

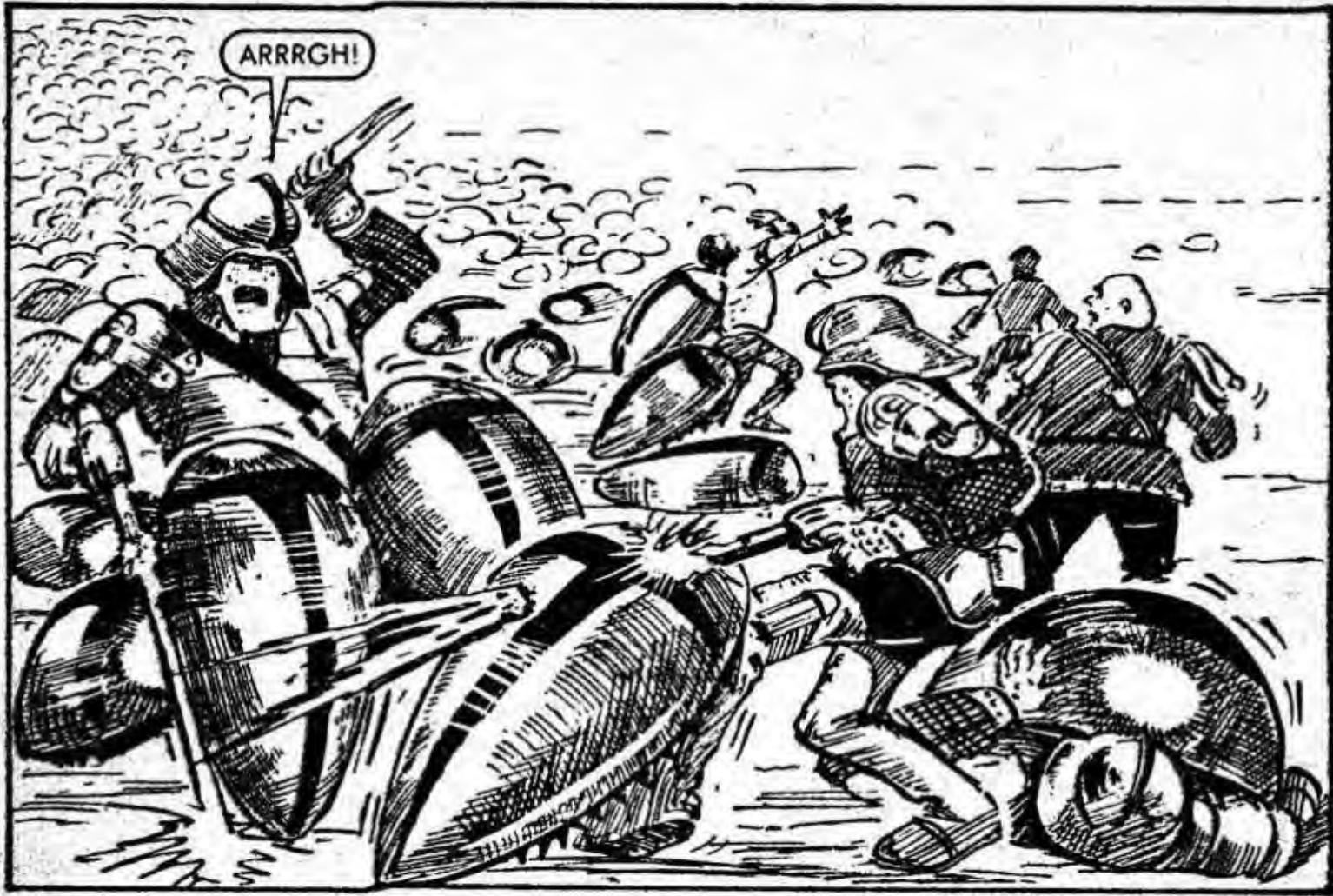


C'MON, TABOR,
I'VE GOT AN IDEA.

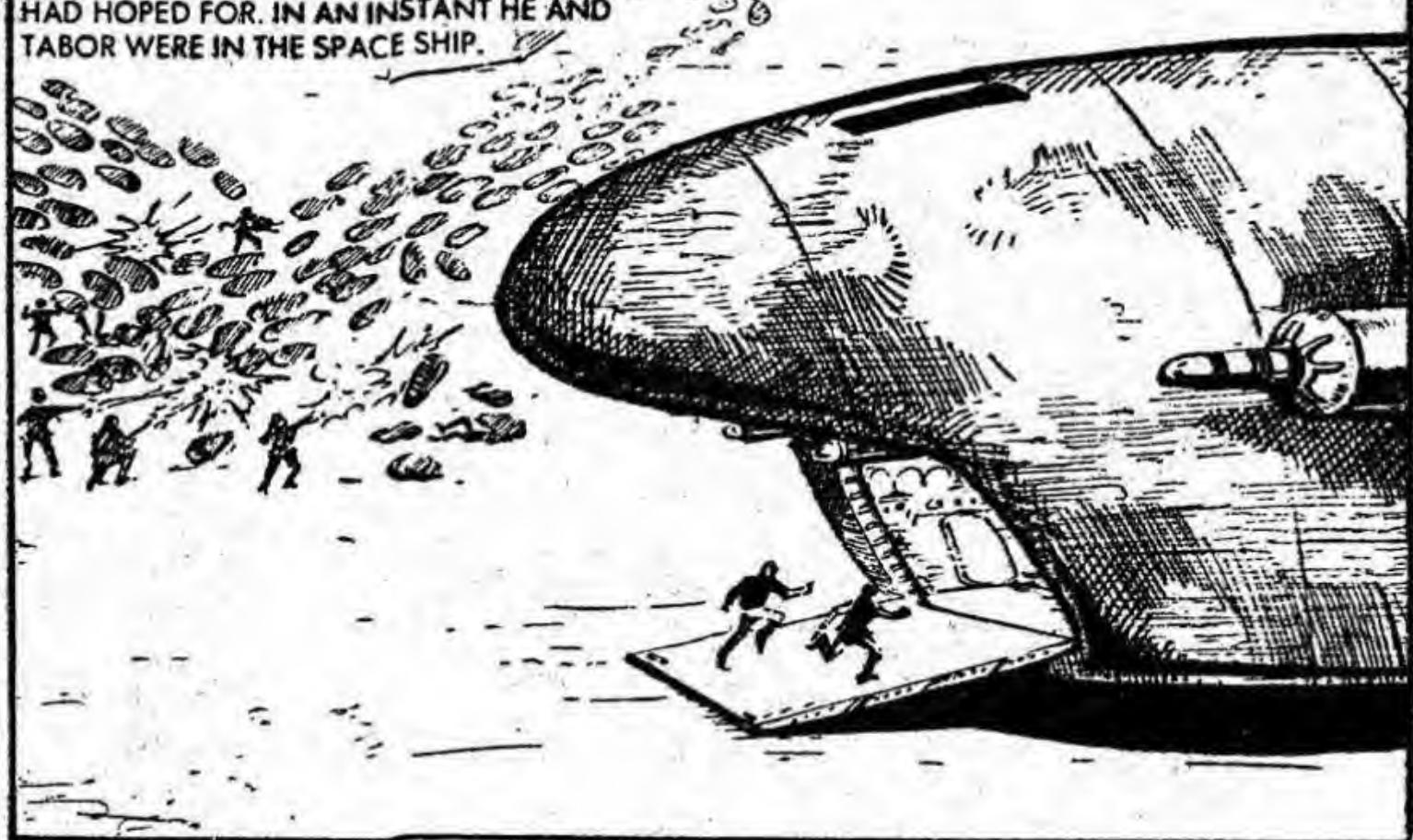


JUDGING THEIR MOMENT, THE SPACERS DASHED INTO THE OPEN TO PUT THE OTHERS BETWEEN THEM AND THE CRYSTOES.





THE CONFUSION WAS EVERYTHING KORD
HAD HOPED FOR. IN AN INSTANT HE AND
TABOR WERE IN THE SPACE SHIP.



THE MERKS LEFT ABOARD THE SHIP WERE QUICKLY DEALT WITH.

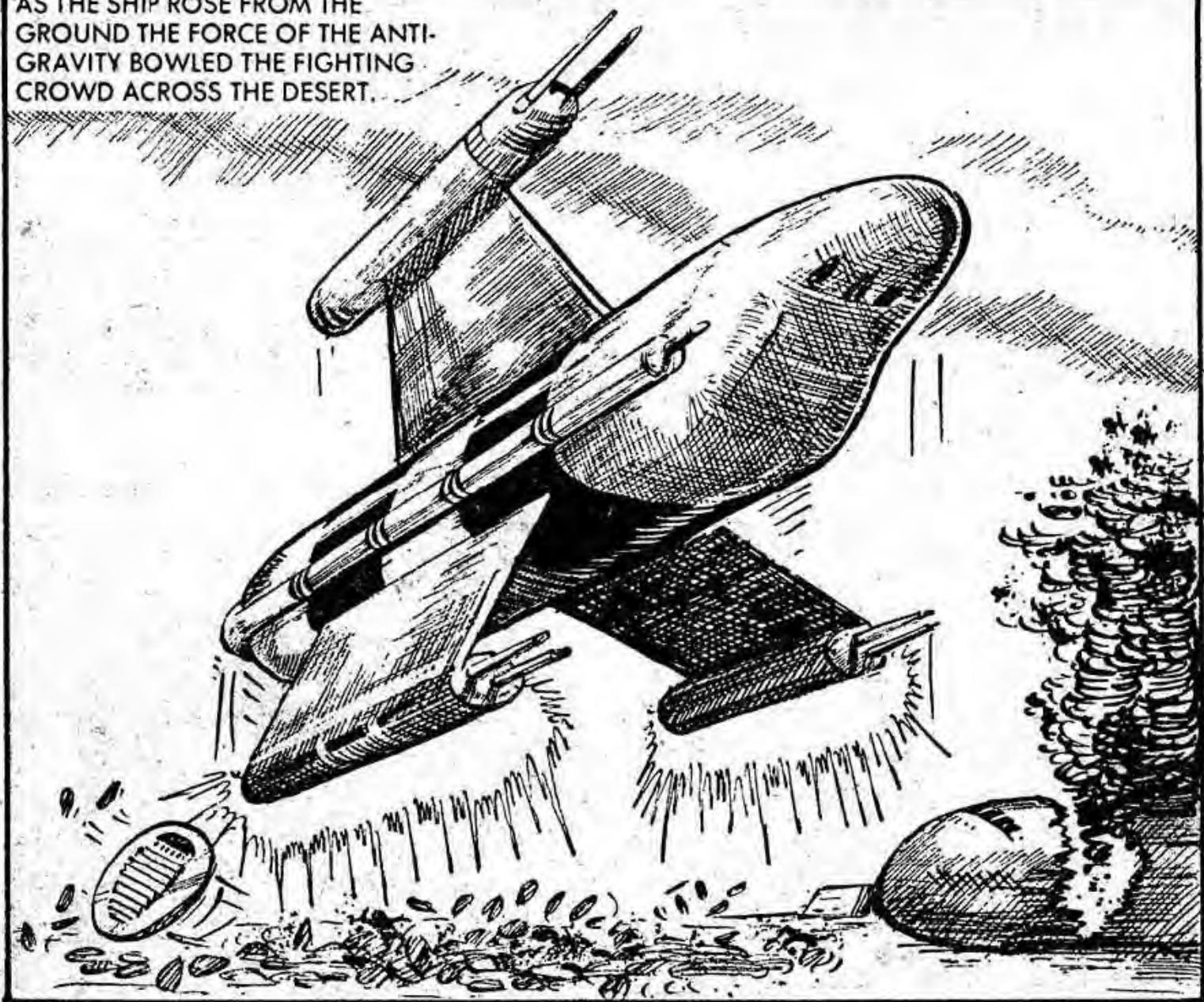


CAN YOU FLY IT, KORD?

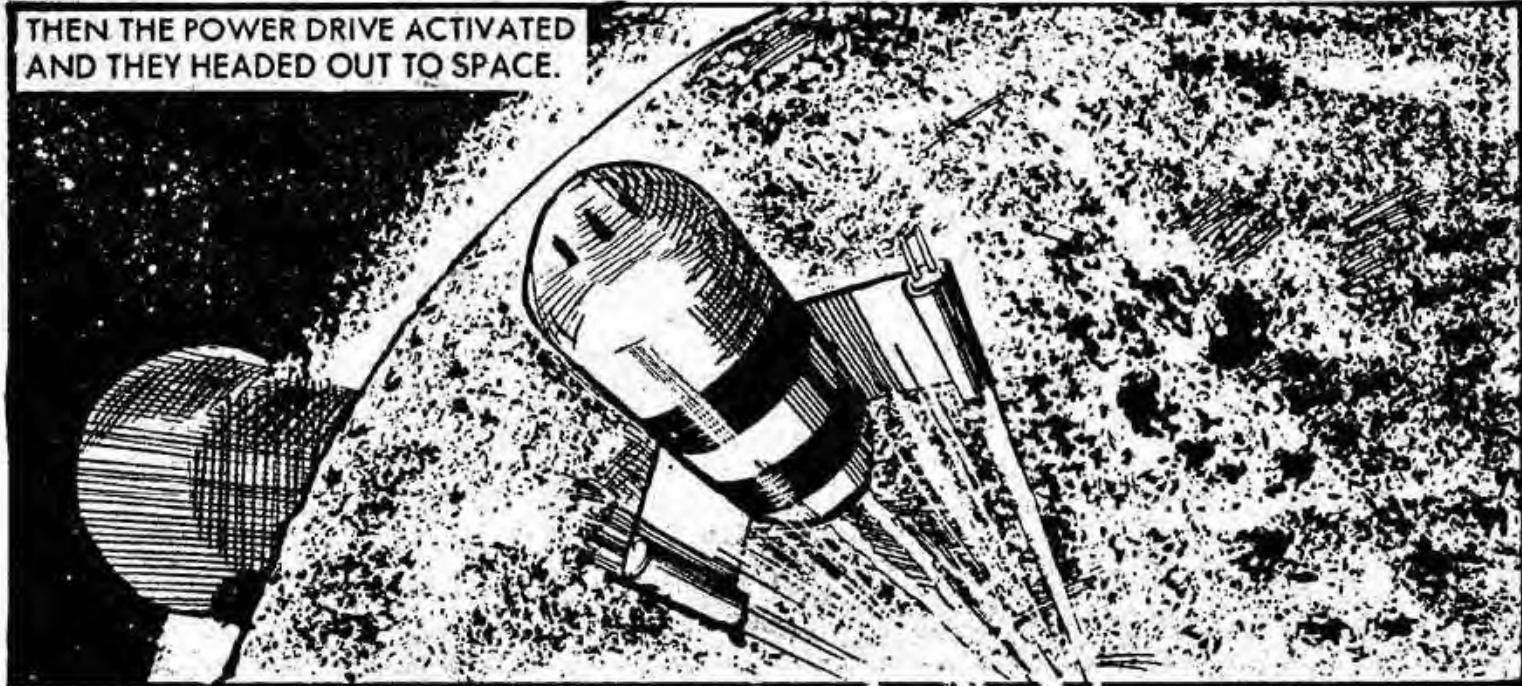
EASY! IT'S A STANDARD LAYOUT.



AS THE SHIP ROSE FROM THE GROUND THE FORCE OF THE ANTI- GRAVITY BOWLED THE FIGHTING CROWD ACROSS THE DESERT.

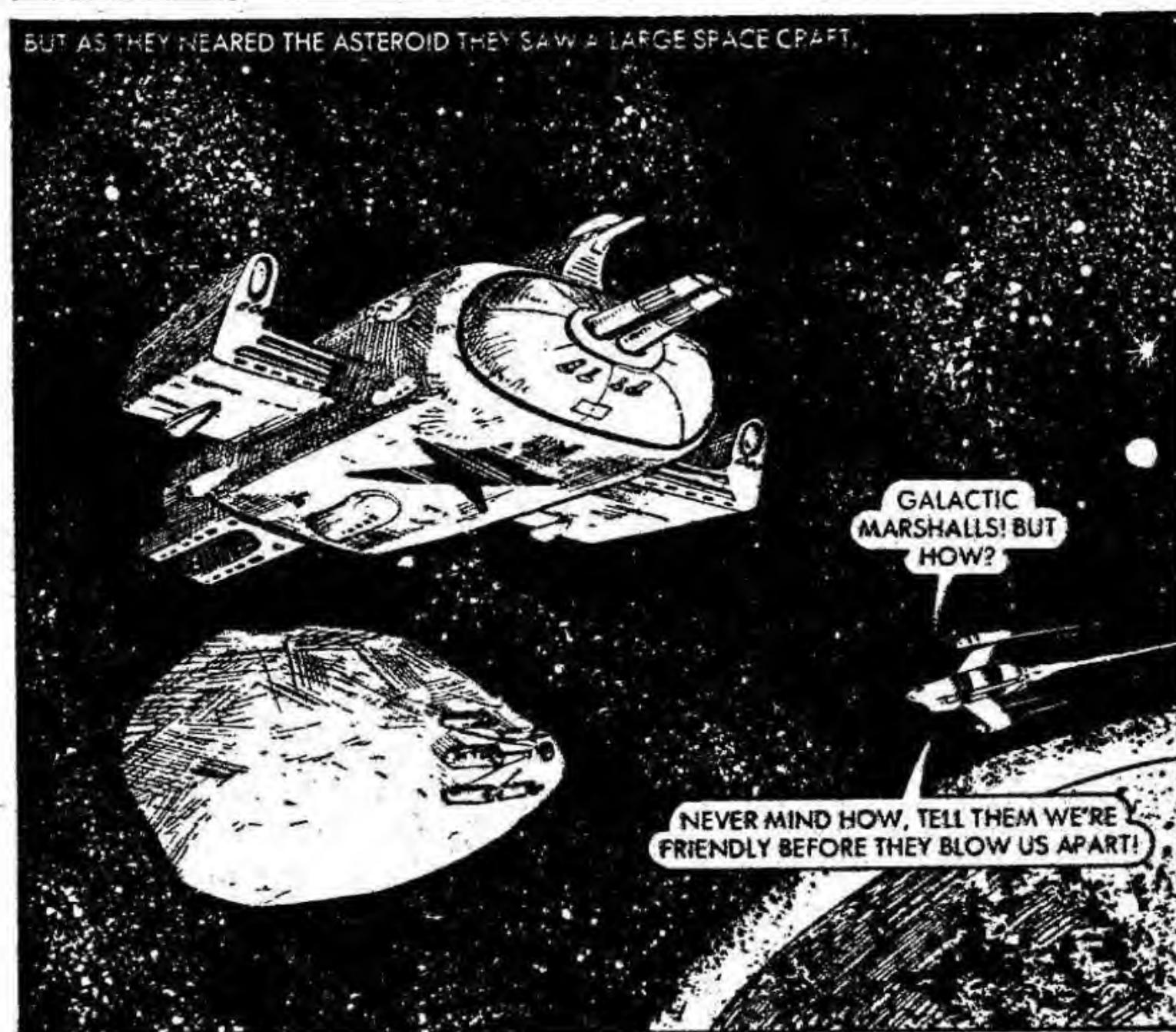


THEN THE POWER DRIVE ACTIVATED AND THEY HEADED OUT TO SPACE.





BUT AS THEY NEARED THE ASTEROID THEY SAW A LARGE SPACE CRAFT.



TABOR QUICKLY MADE CONTACT.

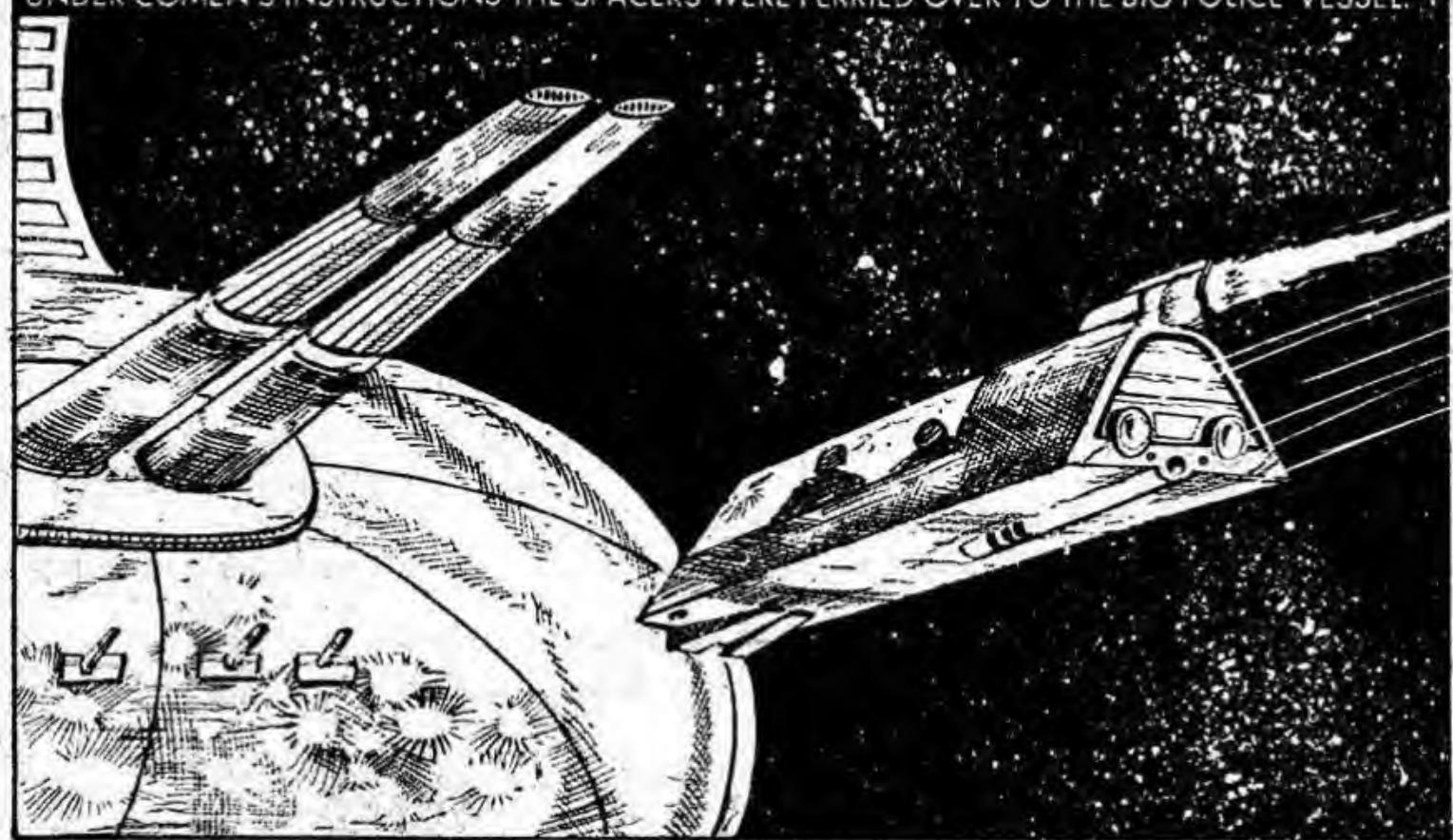
WE DON'T UNDERSTAND
HOW YOU GOT HERE.

WE'VE BEEN TRAILING TWO MERK SHIPS FOR MONTHS. BUT LOST THEM. WE WERE JUST ABOUT TO MAKE A TIME-JUMP WHEN WE PICKED UP A DISTRESS CALL. WE TRACKED IT TO THAT SPACE TUG WHERE WE FOUND THE BODY OF YOUR FRIEND.

IN HIS DYING SECOND HE SENT OUT
A DEEP SPACE ALARM CALL. IN
THE EXCITEMENT NEITHER YOU OR
THE MERKS NOTICED IT.



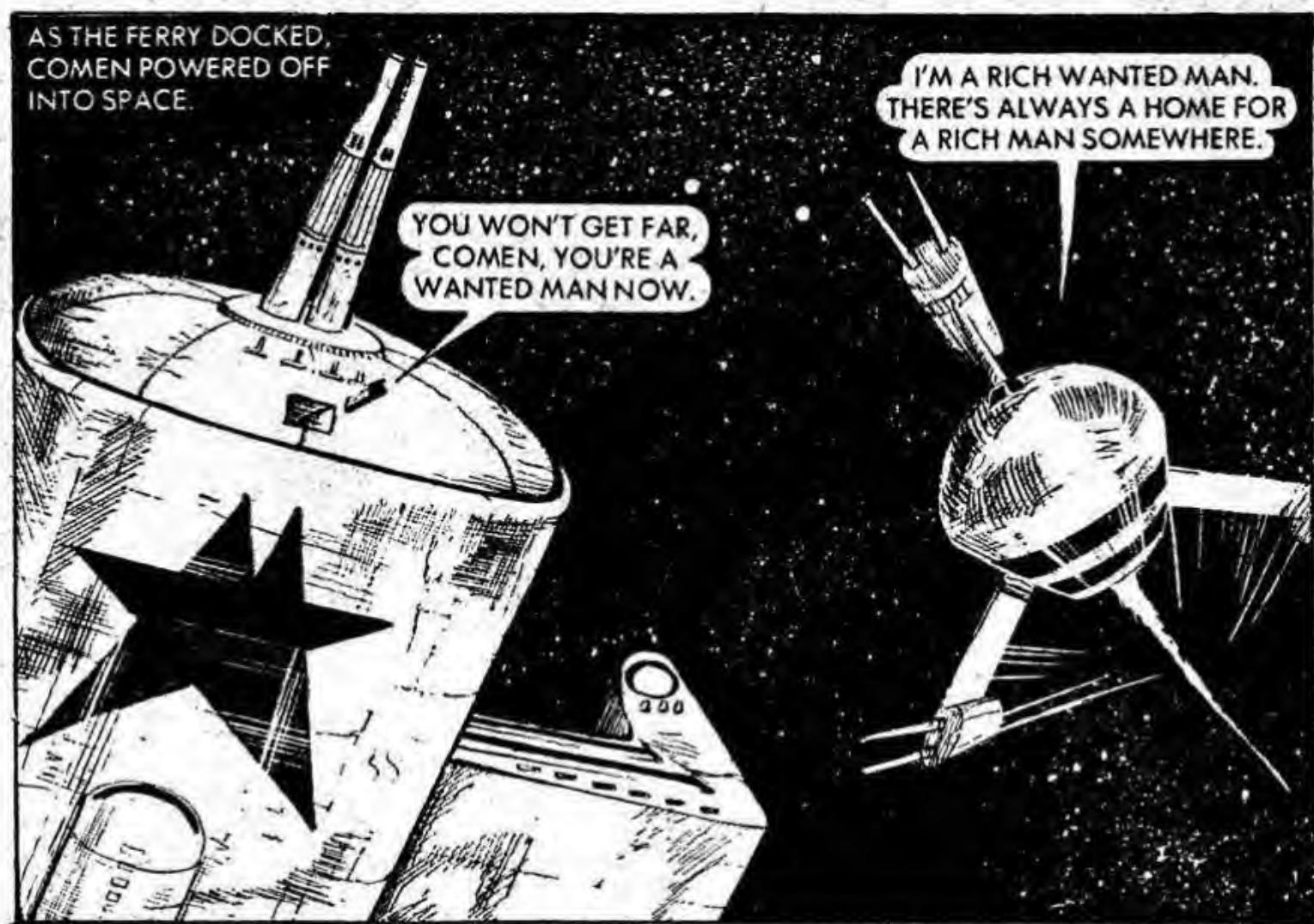
UNDER COMEN'S INSTRUCTIONS THE SPACERS WERE FERRIED OVER TO THE BIG POLICE VESSEL.



AS THE FERRY DOCKED,
COMEN POWERED OFF
INTO SPACE.

I'M A RICH WANTED MAN.
THERE'S ALWAYS A HOME FOR
A RICH MAN SOMEWHERE.

YOU WON'T GET FAR,
COMEN, YOU'RE A
WANTED MAN NOW.



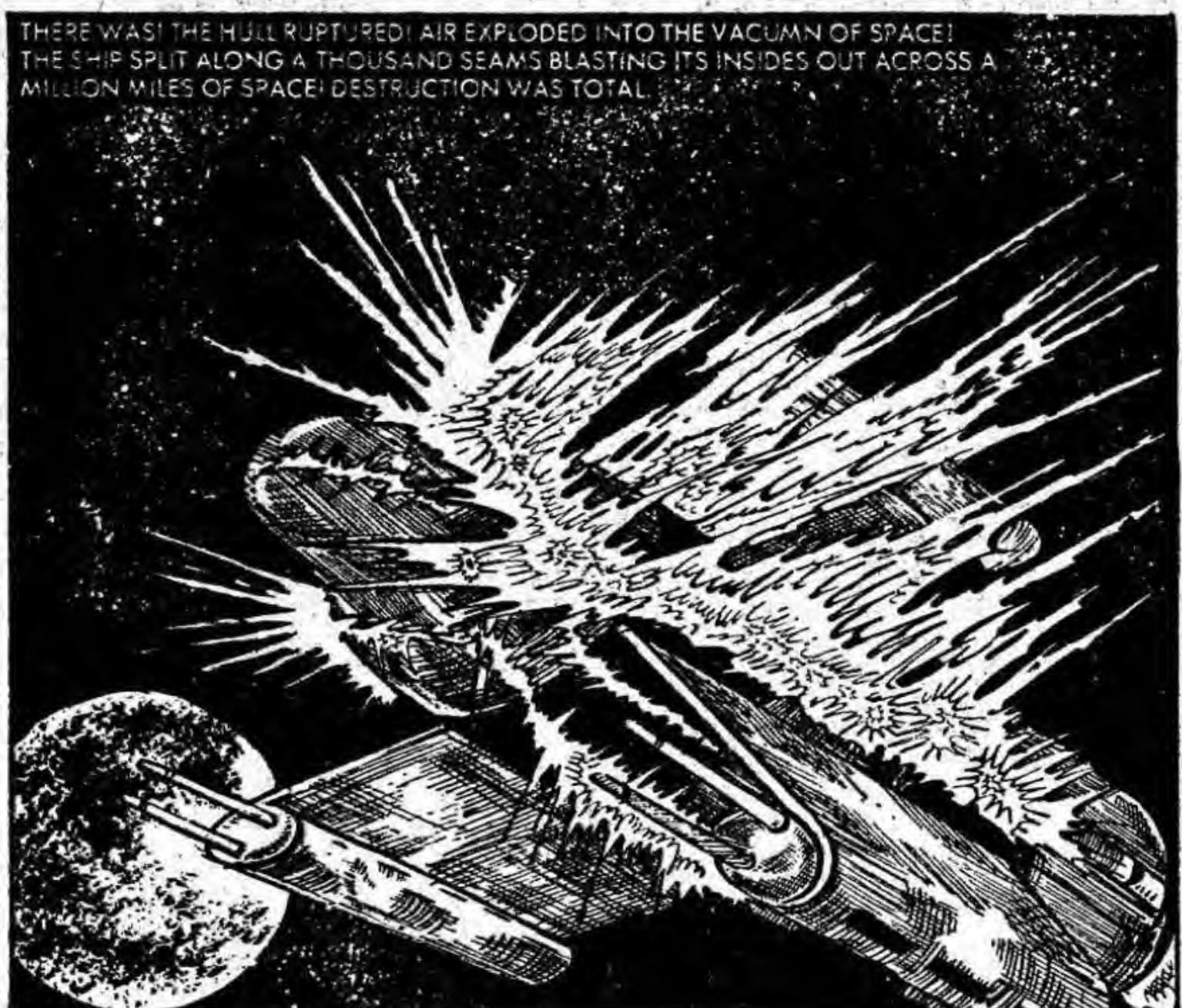




AS WE LEFT THE MERK SHIP I
SAW SEVERAL CRYSTOES ON
THE HULL. THERE'LL BE ONE
ENORMOUS BANG WHEN
THEY EAT RIGHT THROUGH.



THERE WAS! THE HULL RUPTURED! AIR EXPLODED INTO THE VACUUM OF SPACE!
THE SHIP SPLIT ALONG A THOUSAND SEAMS BLASTING ITS INSIDES OUT ACROSS A
MILLION MILES OF SPACE! DESTRUCTION WAS TOTAL.



THE EXPLOSION WAS WATCHED FROM INSIDE THE POLICE VESSEL.

HE'S GONE, AND YOUR THYRILLIUM'S GONE WITH HIM. IT'S BACK TO YOUR PICK AND SHOVEL, BOYS.

THYRILLIUM'S INDESTRUCTABLE. IT SPLITS UP LIKE MERCURY DOES, AND IT'S ATTRACTED TO WATER LIKE A MAGNET.

ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS DRIVE OUR ICE ASTEROID AROUND TO COLLECT IT ALL UP.

**DON'T MISS THIS MONTH'S
OTHER ACTION-PACKED
ADVENTURE**



**ON SALE
AT YOUR
NEWS-
AGENT'S
NOW!**

STARBLAZERS
IN THE CONQUEST
OF SPACE (8)



Pictured here are John Glenn (left) shaking hands with Scott Carpenter before the latter's three orbit space mission on 24 May, 1962. Glenn pioneered orbital flight for the Americans by making three orbits of the Earth on 20 February, 1962, in 4 hours 56 minutes.